



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
Department of Parks & Community Services  
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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Jennifer Schroder, Director  
Michael Cogle, Deputy Director

**Date:** July 3, 2013

**Subject:** Totem Lake Park Master Plan Update

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council receives an update on the Totem Lake Park Master Plan process and reviews proposed park design program elements.

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

#### **Totem Lake Business District Revitalization a High City Priority**

In December of 2010 the City Council adopted Resolution R-4856, approving a Preliminary Action Plan for revitalizing the Totem Lake Business District and directing City departments to reprioritize work tasks accordingly. In response, the Park Board in 2011 forwarded recommendations to the Council regarding potential park-related projects. One of these recommendations was for the City to develop a master plan for the Totem Lake Park property.

The Urban Land Institute also recommended in 2011 that Totem Lake Park be developed as a catalyzing strategy along with development of the Cross Kirkland Corridor to help create a "sense of place" in Totem Lake. The ULI report said "The Lake itself can become the heart of a redeveloping neighborhood and a place with which Totem Lake residents, existing and new, can truly identify."

In February 2013 the City Council formally adopted the City's 2013 – 2014 Work Program, which included emphasis on Totem Lake revitalization:

*"Revitalize the Totem Lake Business District through continued implementation of the Totem Lake Action Plan to further the goals of Financial Stability and Economic Development."*

In March 2013 the City Council approved funding in the amount of \$120,000 to create a Totem Lake Park Master Plan. Working in conjunction with the property owner, King Conservation District, the goal is to develop an overall plan for future park and recreation improvements to the Lake property.

## **Totem Lake Park Master Plan Context and Project Goals**

Totem Lake Park is a 17-acre site located in the heart of the Totem Lake Urban Center. Owned by the King Conservation District and co-managed by the City of Kirkland, the lake has been known by several names over the years, but became known as Totem Lake in 1973 after the opening of the nearby shopping mall. The Park is comprised primarily of wetlands, and the lake itself encompasses about 4 acres of the property.

Totem Lake is physically located at the heart of its namesake neighborhood, yet it is anything but the heart of the community that surrounds it. It has become a lost treasure as projects and properties around it have been developed. The keys to unlocking the site's riches and re-engaging it into the surrounding fabric is embedded in the following elements that will form a basis for the Master Plan process:

### ***What...there's a lake in Totem Lake?***

The lake and wetland itself is a gem, but it seems very few people in the surrounding community know it's even there. There is limited access to the site with development and natural barriers walling off the site from all sides. The Master Plan process provides an opportunity to develop a strong sense of place that can become a catalyst for a new vision and new development that can revitalize the greater Totem Lake community.

### ***It's not just a place; it's a starting point and a destination.***

With its location along the forthcoming Cross Kirkland Corridor, both projects can leverage each other, with the whole of their benefits being greater than the sum of the parts. When viewed in tandem with the future regional connections provided by the trail, the park can become a trailhead or destination for those using the trail.

### ***Enhance the human experience while enhancing ecological performance.***

Totem Lake Park is an ecological gem, yet with some obvious impacts from the urban areas that surround it. One of the critical opportunities of this project will be designing a plan that can enhance the human experience of the park, opening it up to become an icon of the community, even as we work to enhance the ecological performance of the lake and wetland.

### ***An economic catalyst.***

Although the park itself may not drive economic development strategies, it is a catalyst that can help bring people to the area. If done right, surrounding development could enable Totem Lake Park to become a destination that then supports other services. In addition, being adjacent to and developed as a vital portion of the Cross Kirkland Corridor, the site brings a unique opportunity to provide services for trail users.

### ***Honor and build on the history.***

Shorelines within the region were commonly used by Native Americans for their rich resources. A research effort will be performed to identify if there was a presence of Native Americans in the area or if there are other historic elements of the former railway that may affect future development. This information may be helpful in telling the story

of the site, and will need to be identified for possible federal or state grants. The neighborhood's agricultural past can also be celebrated through historic interpretation.

***Reach beyond the park.***

Circulation and neighborhood connections are a crucial link to keep the site vital. A big consideration will be regional connections that are possible with the development of the Cross Kirkland Corridor.

**Master Plan Process**

The Parks and Community Services Department has hired The Berger Partnership (Berger) to help develop the Totem Lake Park Master Plan. Berger has overseen a number of public park projects in the region, including most recently Magnuson Park in Seattle, Confluence Park in Issaquah, and Tollgate Farm Park in North Bend. Berger also developed the master plan for the Redmond Central Connector and is currently lead consultant for the Cross Kirkland Corridor Master Plan.

Key subconsultants working with Berger bring a wealth of local knowledge to the project, and include Kirkland-based The Watershed Company for environmental science and permitting tasks, and Bellevue-based CH2M Hill for civil engineering. CH2M Hill has also been working with the City of Kirkland on flood control issues in the Totem Lake area.

The master plan process will be broken into the following major phases:

- I. Site Analysis (April – June)
- II. Develop Design Program (June – July)
- III. Develop Design Alternatives (August – October)
- IV. Final Schematic Design (November – December)

**Site Analysis & Preliminary Park Design Program**

Attached is a summary report from Berger, which outlines the design team's work on the project to date, including site reconnaissance and observations, public input, and a preliminary design program. A public park planning workshop was held on June 1 and additional public input was received as part of the City's June 8 Community Planning Day.

The design program describes the overall vision, programming components, and design considerations for the project. It forms the basis for development of a final schematic design for the property.

Based on site and neighborhood analysis and context, design considerations, and community input, the design team recommends the following items to be considered for the Totem Lake Park Master Plan Design Program:

1. Provide a loop trail that enhances and energizes the site.
2. Provide appropriate amenities to support use of the site (benches, signage, environmental and historical interpretation, seating areas, etc.).

3. Develop a connection in cooperation with Seattle City Light at the utility easement and with local property owners on the "north hill" to allow adjacent community users to access the site.
4. Study and recommend parking opportunities and improved pedestrian access.
5. Provide improved pedestrian connections at Totem Lake Blvd and N.E. 124<sup>th</sup> Street.
6. Develop the CKC to enhance the experience of Totem Lake Park and provide connections to surrounding businesses.
7. Study the development of an upland parcel or parcels for future center, parking, and link to Totem Lake Mall properties.
8. Explore further how adjacent parcels could be re-developed to strengthen and support the programming of the park.
9. Develop a vegetation and wildlife management plan that looks to diversify the existing vegetation, remove invasive species and support a diverse population of wildlife (consider stewardship and work with KCD).
10. Make recommendations on how to improve water quality and how management of the site may help alleviate future flooding issues.
11. Consider how public art could be incorporated into the planning process to energize the site and create an awareness of the lake.
12. Develop and maintain views and access to open water but don't provide for boating activities due to the limited size of the lake.

### **Next Steps**

July 16 – City Council Study Session: Project Report & Review of Preliminary Design Program

August 6 – Request City Council Approval of Park Design Program

September TBA - Schematic Design Alternatives Workshop

October 19 – Community Planning Day – Review Draft Preferred Schematic Plan

Nov/Dec – Finalize Preferred Schematic Design & Park Master Plan

Attachment

# Totem Lake Park Master Plan

## Draft Summary Report

July 3rd, 2013





## Project Introduction and History:

Totem Lake Park is an underutilized asset at the heart of the Totem Lake neighborhood. The master plan process gives a unique opportunity to explore how the lake can become a gem at the heart of the surrounding community.

History around the lake before its present day use as a retail center focused on the former railroad and agriculture. Hay fields, assorted crops and orchards were prevalent around the site. There is little recorded information of Native American use in the area. Lake Wittenmyer was the first recorded name for the lake, named after Walt Wittenmyer, a former logger and city clerk for the City of Kirkland. In 1964 the name changed to Lake Watsine for unknown reasons. Most people referred to the lake as Mud Lake until Totem Lake Mall opened in 1973 and the name officially changed to Totem Lake to match the Native American theme of the adjacent mall.

Heavily impacted by farming and development over time, the lake successfully reestablished itself with native vegetation. A few invasive species are established in the area, but they are not prevalent throughout the site. Ninety species of birds, long eared owl, deer, beaver, muskrat, raccoons, coyotes, turtles, bullfrogs and fish have all been seen or reported on site. Urban runoff caused several issues with sedimentation and water quality while flooding is an issue due to clogged outfall pipes and the downstream effects of beaver activity in the Juanita Creek drainage basin.

Aerial photographs from 1936 reveal the open water portion of the lake was much larger than its present day condition. There is an unconfirmed rumor that peat mining changed the lake's shoreline. It is also possible the drainage pattern changed and the water level lowered when I-405 or the mall were developed. Longtime local residents recall a "floating island" of vegetation which moved around the lake. This island has not been seen for several years. A boat ramp used to be at the southeast shore of the lake (near the present day location of Big-O Tires).

Totem Lake Park covers 17 acres originally part of the Totem Lake Mall property. The mall's developer donated the land to the King Conservation District (KCD) in 1973. At present the site is co-managed by KCD and the City of Kirkland.



1936 aerial image courtesy of King County Imap



Present day aerial image courtesy of King County Imap



Mother and children at Totem Lake courtesy of Eastside Heritage Collection

## Master Planning Process:

The first phase of work is scheduled to run from March to August 2013 with a goal of setting a design program to re-envision Totem Lake Park. The second phase of work runs from approximately August through December 2013 and will turn the park program into two or three design alternatives which will then be vetted down to one master plan through a public process with input from the Park Board, City Staff and City Council.

## Phase 1 - Park Programming

The project kicked off with a site walk around the lake on Thursday, April 4. Attendees included city staff, Park Board members, KCD representatives, and members of the design team.

The following opportunities and constraints were discussed on the tour:

1. The trail and boardwalks should loop or connect around the lake.
2. A connection to the Cross Kirkland Corridor (CKC) would support the site.
3. It is hard to see the lake from surrounding properties or roadways and many people don't even know it's there.
4. Sidewalks along Totem Lake Boulevard are narrow and uninviting to pedestrians.
5. There is currently no onsite parking. Parking is allowed on a private drive at the park access boundary. Current signs are confusing.
6. The health of the lake and its adjacent wetland is good. Although low in biodiversity, the site provides habitat for several species of birds, beaver, turtles and fish, to name a few. Prime conditions for wildlife viewing and supporting other programs.
7. Recurring restoration work parties have removed invasive species and planted native plants.
8. Consider how the site is a catalyst to surrounding development. Look for opportunities to create a gateway at Totem Lake Boulevard as part of the development of CKC.
9. Safety and security is a big concern. There were issues with camping on the site in the past.



In preparation for the first public meeting, The Watershed Company completed a wetland delineation report identifying all critical areas on the site. The report identified the lake and its associated wetland to be approximately 18 acres. The park site itself is 17 acres, so the associated wetland and buffers go beyond park property. This report also identified drainages running parallel to the CKC and a separate wetland to the south of the lake on property owned by King County.

Outreach to surrounding property owners started in this phase to engage and allow those immediately adjacent to the site an opportunity to provide input or share insight for future park improvements. At this time, we have only heard from one surrounding property owner, Brian Lurie of Yuppie Pawn. The project team continues to reach out and is working in conjunction with ongoing meetings with Totem Lake residents and businesses at Café Veloce.

### June 1 Public Park Planning Workshop:

The first public meeting was held on Saturday, June 1 at the Yuppie Pawn parking lot adjacent to the park site. Approximately 25 to 30 members of the local community along with select Park Board members and park staff attended. Jenni Creveling of The Watershed Company led two tours of the lake and wetland complex. The tours gave community members an opportunity to see how diverse and intact the natural area is. For several folks this was the first time they had been to the site and seen the lake.

The design team set up three stations titled Reveal Ecology, Reveal Recreation and Culture, and Re-Imagine Totem Lake. The first two stations provided information about the site and its surrounding environment and asked participants to provide any information they felt was missing or other observations relevant to the project. The final station asked for attendees to share their vision for Totem Lake Park. Information was recorded on tags pinned to the boards. These were then synthesized along with verbal conversations held at the meeting into emerging themes.



# Totem Lake Reveal Park Ecology

## ① Totem Lake Neighborhood

Given the highly urbanized nature of the area surrounding Totem Lake area, runoff into the lake causes degraded water quality, affecting the lake ecosystem and possibly downstream water quality.

## ② Lake Outlet

Flooding affects the site and is a partial result of downstream impacts, some of which are caused by an eager beaver!

## ③ Forested Hillside

The steep hillside to the north of the lake forms a wildlife corridor that also provides a possible connection to Evergreen Hospital and surrounding communities.

## ④ Urban Creeks

Water drains into and out of Totem Lake from the surrounding hillsides and communities.

## ⑤ Adjacent Wetlands

Wetlands separated by the CKC and Totem Lake Blvd. are connected to the lake and need to be considered as to how they impact the site.

## ⑥ Totem Lake Wildlife

How can we enhance wildlife habitat and maintain or improve the function of the site? Consider songbirds, waterfowl, amphibians, fish, & beavers.

## ⑦ Totem Lake Invasives

What Restoration efforts are needed to manage invasive species?



Poster presented at June 1st Public Meeting



Totem Lake is the headwaters of a much larger natural system (a tributary of the Juanita Creek Drainage Basin). The lake and surrounding areas are classified as a depressional wetland approximately 18 acres in size. The open water portion, Totem Lake, comprises approximately 3 acres of the total wetland area. Native vegetation within the wetland includes native scrub-shrub, emergent and aquatic bed plants. Invasive plants are present, including Purple loosestrife, reed canary grass and Himalayan Blackberry. Totem Lake is an ecological gem, yet with some obvious impacts from the urban areas that surround it. One of the critical opportunities of this project will be designing a plan that can enhance the human experience of the park, opening it up to become an icon of the community, even as we work to enhance the ecological performance of the lake and wetland.



# Totem Lake Park Reveal Recreation & Culture

It's not just a place; it's a starting point. If there was improved site access and connections to the surrounding community, could Totem Lake be revealed as the central park of the neighborhood? What would help strengthen the Lake as a destination?

An economic catalyst: Would you like to sit out on a patio for brunch looking out over the lake on a sunny morning? Surrounding development could enable Totem Lake Park to become a destination that then supports other services.

- (A) Totem Lake Park
- (B) Surrounding Properties
- (C) Totem Lake Mall
- (D) Cross Kirkland Corridor
- (E) Evergreen Hospital
- (F) Neighborhood

Poster presented at June 1st Public Meeting

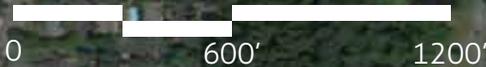
Mudd Lake, one of many names in Totem Lake history, has a story to tell. Starting with a vast forest and cultures of Native Americans, the area has transitioned from agriculture and railroads to automobiles, modern development and industry. The landscape around the lake over the past 100 years has seen a dramatic change. Totem Lake is physically located at the heart of its namesake neighborhood, yet it is anything but the heart of the community that surrounds it.

What...there's a lake in Totem Lake? Did you know there was a lake here? Limited access to the site surrounded by development and natural barriers make it hard to get here. There is a great opportunity to develop a strong sense of place that can become a catalyst to revitalize the greater Totem Lake Community.

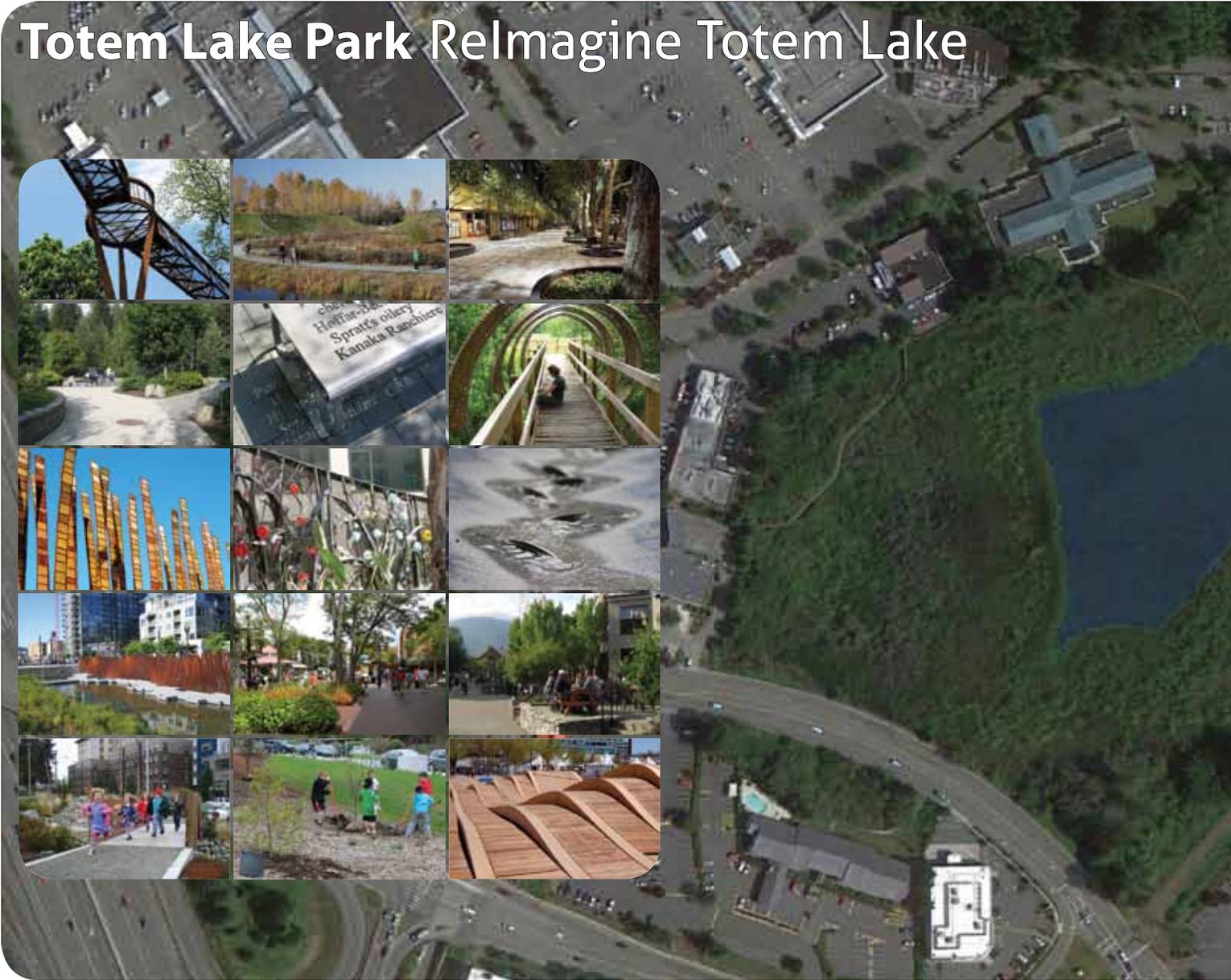
Honor and build on the history: Agriculture was prevalent around the lake during early days of Kirkland, and the railway has left its imprint on the shores as well. How can this help build character for the site?

Reach beyond the park! With its location along the forthcoming Cross Kirkland Corridor, the Park brings a unique opportunity to provide connections to businesses and amenities for trail users.

**What activities, existing or new, would bring you to Totem Lake?**



# Totem Lake Park ReImagine Totem Lake



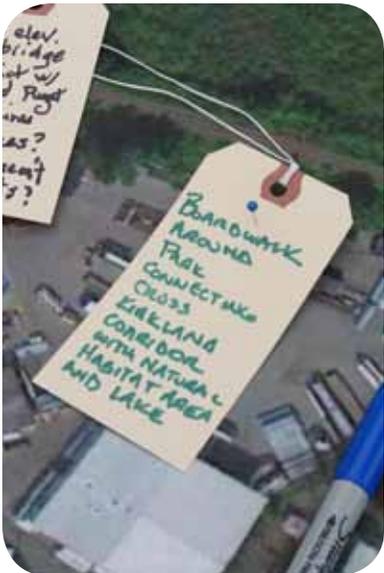
Poster presented at June 1st Public Meeting



Finding the magic is the trick to successful places, from the design through implementation. The ultimate solution for Totem Lake is about finding what's unique and building on it to make this a great place to be. With this in mind, we have one simple question for you:

**Share your vision for Totem Lake.**

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## Emerging Themes from Public Meeting 1:

1. Provide a loop trail with minimal impacts to wildlife habitat and ecology. (Strong support for maintaining what's there and building from it.)
  - a. Include a connection through the site to the mall, which would be a better experience than walking along Totem Lake Blvd.
  - b. Safety and security are a concern and need to be addressed.
2. Install viewing platforms to the north or at locations around the lake to view the open water and wildlife. (Confirm if views to Mt. Rainier are possible.)
3. Provide access/connections to the adjacent neighborhood (CKC, SCL Right-of-Way, and steep hillside open space to the northeast).
4. Improve pedestrian crossing/gateway at CKC, Totem Lake Boulevard and 124<sup>th</sup> Street (grade separated):
  - a. Consider "all-way crossing" like at Pike Place Market.
5. Create more upland for additional amenities: wetland education center, parking, picnicking, lawn, etc. (Acquire adjacent property(s)?)
6. Program to remove invasive species/site stewardship. (Establish a friends of group?)
7. Make the site accessible, providing seating areas, benches, and interpretive elements.
8. Gain support for the park site from the surrounding businesses to preserve the wetland/lake.
9. Create viewpoints by developing a vegetation management plan to allow views into the site.
10. Consider if access to the water for human powered boats is desirable.

The project was presented to the Park Board on April 10 and June 12 to review what was learned and the outcome of the public meeting.

## Recommended Park Program:

Based on site and neighborhood analysis and context, design considerations, and community input, the design team recommends the following items be considered for the Totem Lake Park Master Plan Design Program:

1. Provide a loop trail to enhance and energize the site.
2. Provide appropriate amenities to support use of the site (benches, signage, interpretation, seating areas, etc.).
3. Develop a connection in cooperation with SCL at the utility easement and with local property owners on the “north hill” to allow adjacent community users to access the site.
4. Study and recommend parking opportunities and improved pedestrian access.
5. Provide improved pedestrian connections at Totem Lake Blvd. and 124<sup>th</sup> Street.
6. Develop the CKC to enhance the experience of Totem Lake Park and provide connections to surrounding businesses.
7. Study the development of an upland parcel(s) for future center, parking, and link to Totem Lake Mall properties.
8. Explore further how adjacent parcels could be redeveloped to strengthen and support the programming of the park.
9. Develop a vegetation and wildlife management plan to diversify existing vegetation, remove invasive species, and support a diverse population of wildlife (consider stewardship and work with KCD).
10. Make recommendations on how to improve water quality and how site management may help alleviate future flooding issues.
11. Consider how public art could be incorporated into the planning process to energize the site and create an awareness of the lake.
12. Develop and maintain views and access to open water but don't provide for boating activities due to the limited size of the lake.



## Next Steps:

Based on input from the work session, Park Program Elements will be tweaked and then presented for Council adoption on August 6.

Additional work in process after receiving input from the community includes studying utility franchise agreements with Seattle City Light and King County Metro to determine how trails and program elements could occur in the utility right-of-ways. The team will also continue to make contact with surrounding property owners to include them in the planning process.



## Cultural Resources:

A quick review of the state's cultural resources database identifies no recorded sites or historic buildings within the parcel. However, no surveys were conducted on the parcel (some nearby for road construction). The site is considered "very high risk" for cultural resources in the probability model since it includes a shoreline Native Americans may have utilized. If the project seeks state or federal funding for the project, the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) will require a site survey.

It is recommended this be further studied after a preferred master plan is adopted prior to completion of the first phase of construction.

## End of Report

