

## McDonald-Denny Park Slide Neighborhood Update

Big Finn Hill Park experienced a landslide in November of 2016, closing a portion of Denny Creek Trail because of slide debris and damage to a bridge along the trail. Over the past few months, the City of Kirkland has been working with King County, who owns the park, and Buchan Homes, the developers of a small residential neighborhood at the top of the slide area, to determine possible causes of the slide and discuss possible mitigation measures. The City cares deeply about protecting and preserving critical areas and it is clear from our contacts with both King County and Buchan Homes they share these same cares and concerns.

Historically the area has been subject to landslides as part of natural processes, and this year has been one of the wettest on record, so pinpointing the exact causes of the slide is difficult. But it must be noted that the extreme rainfall has likely had some impact on the situation. For instance, in 2016, for the third consecutive year, precipitation was significantly above normal in the area, fueled in large part by the wettest October (2016) on record.<sup>1</sup> Saturated soil near a new building site left many speculating as to possible causes of the slide, but geotechnical reports received by the City to date do not point to any single cause. All three parties are now focused on solutions. Unfortunately, there is no fast solution to this issue, and there is no easy fix. Additionally, any final action will need approval from the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and any permit they issue will dictate the timeframe in which cleanup work can take place.

Progress has been made to stabilize the area. Some have called for quick removal of the landslide debris that has rechanneled the stream. But the consultants, who are expert geotechnical engineers, have advised the parties that the majority of restoration work should commence after this unusually wet season begins to taper off and the soil

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.seattleweatherblog.com/rain-stats/rainfall-2016/>

starts to dry out. The developer took immediate measures, including applying straw to the hillside, for temporary erosion control. Furthermore, they seeded the slope with grass and that seeding is now taking hold and growing for additional control.

The City confirmed that the developer is not discharging any drainage toward the hillside and that on-site surface water is being collected and piped to a detention pond which then connects to the City storm system within 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave. NE. Prior to work on this new development, all on-site surface water drained toward the slope. The City has also had a geotechnical team review the developer's original plans. They recommended some plan changes to the buildable landscape because of the landslide.

As the area begins to dry out, the County and Buchan Homes will continue to work with the geotechnical engineers to install additional restoration on the landslide. As soon as a final plan is established, the City will advise the public. Again, the unusually wet weather the area is experiencing prohibits any parties taking final actions until the weather dries out.

City construction inspectors are making onsite visits and continue to monitor the situation.

Later this year the City of Kirkland will be updating its steep slope regulations and will be evaluating whether changes are needed. This slide and the unusually wet conditions will be fully considered as changes are evaluated.

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