



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

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Lynn Zwaagstra, Director of Parks and Community Services  
John Lloyd, Deputy Director of Parks and Community Services  
Sara Shellenbarger, Recreation Manager

**Date:** May 4, 2021

**Subject:** Summer Action Plan Phase 1 – Maintenance and Operations Investments, Recreation Programming and Parks to Support Inclusivity, COVID Recovery and Economic Development

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receives a presentation on the proposed "Summer Action Plan, Phase 1." Phase 1 proposes additional investments in Parks maintenance and operations staffing to keep Kirkland Parks and beaches and the marina safe, clean and COVID-compliant throughout the summer. Phase 1 also proposes new one-time recreation resources to create recreation programs and events to contribute to the community's recovery from COVID-19 with an emphasis on inclusivity and economic recovery. Potential funding sources for these investments could come from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) revenues, existing community event resources, and/or one-time excess revenues from 2020. Council is asked to provide direction on what, if any, operations, programs and events should be funded with one-time funding in the current biennium for this goal.

## **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION**

### *Summer Action Plan*

In early April, the region experienced a week of inviting summer-like weather. Skies were sunny and clear, and the temperatures ranged in the mid-70s. This gave Kirkland a preview of what to expect this summer as the community emerges from COVID-19. Parks and beaches were packed with visitors seeking outdoor activity. Downtown restaurants and shops were bustling with people. Cyclists filled the bike lanes and throngs of pedestrians walked along the waterfront. There was clearly a community-wide pent up need to get out and reconnect with family, friends and experiences. Overall, this week was a positive experience for the community and for City government. However, the summer preview week also demonstrated many challenges for the City. COVID-19 compliance such as social distancing and mask-wearing was often abandoned. Downtown parking was once again scarce, and parking conflicts increased. Garbage cans in parks were overflowing and large amounts of trash were left all over the parks.

Off-leash dogs and dog feces in parks increased significantly. Concerns on social media about individuals experiencing homelessness camping in public areas increased. Boating season and City summer initiatives such as closing portions of Park Lane and Lake Washington Boulevard to parking will provide additional positive experiences to the community but also add to the challenges. The need for additional resources in Parks & Community Services, Public Works, Police and other departments to meet these challenges through a "Summer Action Plan" was introduced to the Council at the April 6 Council meeting during the COVID-19 special presentation.

The City Manager convened a cross-departmental "Summer Action Team" led by Deputy City Manager Tracey Dunlap. Departments were asked to propose targeted investments to help the community experience a safe, healthy and enjoyable summer that also complies to the extent possible with state guidelines for COVID-19 phases. The funding totals of these proposed Summer Action Plan investments will be significant. However, they are envisioned as primarily one-time due to the unique circumstances of helping the community navigate a second COVID-19 summer as vaccinations increase but the uncertainty of COVID-19 variants and state restrictions remain. These proposed investments will be presented to the Council at the May 4, May 18, and June 1 Council meetings for discussion and direction. Phase 1 of those discussions relates to Parks investments with a focus on safety, inclusion, and economic development.

#### *Summer Action Team, Phase 1*

On January 3, 2017, City Council proclaimed Kirkland to be a safe, inclusive and welcoming city for all people. Since this time, the City has focused on how to support all those who live, work, and play in Kirkland. The City is committed to supporting efforts focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging through the development and implementation of Resolution R-5434. During the 2021-2022 budget process, City Council identified the need for additional cultural events to be held in Kirkland to further support this goal.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the City's ability to reach a broad audience through traditional recreation programs. As restrictions from the state are lifted, Parks and Community Services (PCS) will once again offer in-person programs to the community. In addition to traditional programs (swim lessons, day camps, sports and fitness, etc.), PCS staff is positioned to provide additional events and programs with a focus on equity and inclusion that will engage and support the entire Kirkland community while driving economic development.

### **BENEFITS OF RECREATION IN COVID RECOVERY**

Parks and Recreation services are an essential part of healthy vibrant communities, providing countless benefits. Department staff promote health and wellness through the facilities and parks the City operates, and the programs and services provided to the community. Whether it is through a sports program, preschool class, senior meal program, or just a clean, well maintained park, the community receives significant benefit from parks and recreation programs. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has three pillars that guide this industry: Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity. When making strategic decisions about programs, services, and other projects, these pillars guide staff.

Key benefits of recreation activities include physical, emotional and social wellbeing as outlined below. These factors are crucial in recovery from COVID-19 due to the social isolation, physical inactivity and emotional distress caused by the virus.

- Physical: Being physically active improves cardiovascular health, aids in weight management, improves quality of sleep, combats joint pain and stiffness and improves memory and brain function.
- Emotional: Regular physical activity reduces stress and improves symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Social: Connecting to peers, groups and community improves physical, mental and emotional health. Avoiding social isolation helps people live longer with a higher overall quality of life. Building social connections grows a sense of community, which assists in the struggle against unemployment, crime, vandalism and economic decline.

Additionally, a quality Parks and Recreation system drives economic growth. Recreation programs and events provide local jobs, draw people to the area to engage in local shopping or dining, and make communities more attractive to homebuyers and businesses. This is another area critical for recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

## **INITIATIVE OVERVIEW**

The Recreation Division typically offers over 2000 programs each year. Staff are proposing to enhance current offerings through the addition of community building events that are designed to get people active, engaged and developing community. Moreover, these events and programs will be designed with an equity and inclusion lens in order to celebrate our diverse community, build a city where everyone is respected, valued and has a sense of belonging, and in an effort to provide more equitable access to community building events. Partnership with the City Manager's Office staff working on R-5434 initiatives and community outreach is a key component for success.

### *Summer Special Events*

Before discussion of this initiative, recommendations around summer special events should be highlighted. As of the writing of this memo, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are climbing again in King County and according to the state metrics, King County will likely return to the state Phase 2 restrictions. As cases rise and uncertainty continues, the City Manager, Parks Director and Emergency Manager are recommending that large scale special events continue to be prohibited in Kirkland. Even though it is technically possible for large events to propose to comply with state restrictions, the possibility of these events becoming super spreader events, especially among younger adults and children, is not worth the health risk to the community. This prohibition would be for any large events that could potentially draw thousands of visitors in June, July and August. Potential special events in September and beyond could be considered as more information becomes known in the upcoming months.

### Programs to Promote Inclusivity, COVID Recovery and Economic Development

Wherever Parks “events” are discussed below, they will be subject to the same prohibition of large-scale special events in the summer months. All events and activities will also comply with all COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

The following are potential programs, events and services that would activate, engage, and build a welcoming and inclusive community, all while supporting economic recovery. Many of the programs that can be implemented this summer are planned for inland parks that will help attract community members and visitors to parks other than waterfront parks. Enhanced staffing levels are proposed at the waterfront parks, and community building events begin to grow as we move into the fall and winter. These programs and events are planned through 2022, at which point they would be assessed for continuation into the future through the budget process.

- Fall Harvest Festival
  - One day or weekend-long community celebration focused around educational programs, activities, crafts and other entertainment.
- Movies in the Parks
  - Build off the drive-in movie pilot held in February and may include summer movies in the parks or fall/spring drive-in movies.
- See Spot Splash/Bark in the Park
  - To close out the summer, dogs would be invited to take a dip at the Peter Kirk Pool.
  - Vendors and/or sponsors would be invited to sell supplies/services.
  - This event would encourage pet licensing and education about other pet-related codes.
  - Promotional items could include pet waste bag dispensers and leashes to encourage people to pick up after their pet, helping to keep Kirkland’s parks, sidewalks, rivers, creeks, and streams clean.
- Polar Bear Plunge
  - This event was originally organized by the Recreation Division and has taken place in Kirkland for the past 19 years. City funding for this event was cut during the 2008 Great Recession but has continued as an unofficial event since then.
  - The current organizer of the event has declined to seek a special event permit to allow this event to continue. PCS staff would resume oversight of this event providing an elevated level of safety for participants.
  - Participants would have the opportunity to purchase souvenirs to commemorate the event including “I Survived the Polar Bear Plunge” apparel. This “survival” bonds people via the shared challenge.
- Food Truck Rally
  - This weekly event could be held during the summer at a variety of Kirkland parks aside from the downtown waterfront parks.
  - 8-10 food trucks would be gathered to sell a variety of unique food options each week to encourage small gatherings in a selected park, which would likely rotate to help serve different neighborhoods throughout the city.

- Sports and Fitness Events and Programs
  - Larger scale sports and fitness programs in a variety of formats including grass volleyball tournaments, yoga in the park, cornhole tournaments and leagues, and pickleball events.
  - These programs could remain COVID-compliant and draw people from around the region.
- Pop-up Sprinkler Parks - Summer
  - A weekly pop-up water play zone rotating at inland parks to include sprinklers, misters, water toys and bubbles to help families and young people cool off in the summer months and to attract people to parks other than the waterfront parks.
- Enhanced Lifeguard Service at Swimming Beaches
  - Additional lifeguard staffing at the three swimming beaches: Houghton Beach, Waverly Beach and Juanita Beach.
  - Additional Beach Lifeguards would help with the anticipated increased attendance at beaches over the summer and would assist with outreach and promotion of other parks, programs and services.
  - If lifeguards can be hired and certified in time, the lifeguarded swim areas would be opened early.
- Enhanced harbor master positions / seasonal park ranger
  - The harbor master position will be converted to a seasonal park ranger
  - Add 1 position 7 days per week, 10 hours per day, for 97 days.
  - Position will assist with heavy volume at the docks and engage in education and limited enforcement (primarily moorage) at the waterfront parks.
- Enhanced seasonal laborers for the downtown area and waterfront parks
  - Add 2 positions 7 days per week, 8 hours per day, for 97 days.
  - These positions will be focused on garbage pick-up, restocking of supplies, general safety and appearance of the parks.
- Pop Up Dog Parks – Summer/Fall
  - 2 temporary dog parks placed at interior, non-waterfront parks
  - Temporary fencing and signage would be installed at selected parks.
  - The 2 parks would rotate 2 - 3 times during the summer/fall to minimize damage to the turf caused by this temporary use.
- Expanded Holiday programming
  - Building off the success of the virtual Holiday Lights challenge, staff would provide expanded holiday programming.
  - This event could be expanded in partnership with the existing Winterfest event provided by the Kirkland Downtown Association.
    - Include other winter holidays (Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's, Kwanza, etc.)
    - Expand the Holiday Lights event to include decorations in parks and local businesses.
    - Carol-oke – holiday themed karaoke
- Día de los Muertos
  - Day-long event with various activities, food trucks, bands, etc.
    - Food trucks would be available offering Hispanic/Latin Cuisine.

- Bands offering the sounds of Mexico and Spain such as Mariachi, Norteño, Banda and Salsa.
  - Crafts such as paper flowers, sugar skulls, gods-eye weaving, coloring paper sugar skull masks, etc.
  - Additional activities could include a storyteller, face painting and some type of Hispanic Marketplace where vendors could sell packaged food items and heritage crafts.
- This event would be developed in partnership with an organization from the Latin community to help plan and execute the event. Their knowledge of this cultural holiday would be essential to its success.
- Taste the World Kirkland: International Food and Craft Marketplace
  - Event featuring diverse foods, an artisanal marketplace and music highlighting a focus on cultural groups here in Kirkland or on the Eastside rather than more globally around the world.
  - Staff would connect with culturally specific community organizations to help bring in these vendors/musicians/activities and diverse audiences.
- Juanita Friday Market Food Access Program Support
  - Funding would allow staff to support multiple programs focused on providing financial assistance in association with the Juanita Friday Market.
    - WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is part of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for lower-income Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The WIC Program provides healthy foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services.
    - Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is part of the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA). The SFMNP improves nutrition for lower-income adults over age 60 with nutritious meals.
  - Eligible participants are issued SFMNP checks or coupons in addition to their regular benefits. These checks or coupons are used to buy eligible foods from farmers at farmers markets that have been authorized by the State.
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Matching Programs help stretch SNAP dollars by providing matching funds or other incentives. Common matches include a \$1 for \$1 match; getting \$2 for using \$5 of SNAP funding, or something similar. For example, at some markets with a \$2:\$5 match, for every \$5 spent with SNAP funding, the market provides an additional \$2 to spend on fresh produce.
- Scavenger hunts and virtual programs (trivia contests)
  - A highlight of the pandemic, staff will continue to offer a variety of scavenger hunts and virtual programs that would focus on various cultural holidays and celebrations.
  - These programs have been free of charge to reach a broad audience throughout the community. By continuing this, and other free and virtual programming, staff would be able to serve those who may not have the means to participate otherwise.

- Although there was no fee for these programs, these programs often result in donations to the scholarship program which is asked during registration.

### **INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

At current funding and staffing levels, the Department can change its program mix by reducing some less successful programs and adding new programs. This would allow the addition of some of the above programs like food truck rallies and sports and fitness programs. However, additional resources are needed to add the larger-scale programs and events due to the planning time and staff required to assist onsite during the event. Staff is showing some one-time expenses that would invest in equipment that can be used going forward for these types of programs and events. Also proposed as one-time for the remainder of 2021-2022, are staffing expenses. These investments are being proposed as "pilot programs" to allow a more in-depth analysis of the success, potential revenue recovery options, and future requirements of offering these events and activities.

#### **One Time Funding**

Operating Supplies: \$37,500

- General event supplies: \$10,000 - \$20,000
  - This funding would purchase supplies and equipment that could be reused year after year. This would include sports equipment, pop-up tents, tables, etc.
- Pop-up Sprinkler Park Supplies: \$2,500
  - This would fund sprinklers, water toys, pop-up splash pads and signage
- Pop-up Dog Park Supplies: \$15,000
  - This would fund secure temporary fencing and signage

Holiday Decorations: \$50,000

- Holiday lights, decorations, lighted figures, and other supplies and materials needed for expanded Holiday Lights programming

Contingent Staff: \$106,333

- \$24,000 for enhanced service at lifeguarded swimming beaches (1 additional shift for every day of summer operations at each beach).
- \$26,829 for enhanced seasonal laborers.
- \$25,902 for rental trucks for the temporary staff.
- \$24,102 for enhanced harbor master/seasonal park ranger positions.
- \$3,000 for additional staff to operate the 6-week pop-up sprinkler park program.
- \$2,500 for additional staff to install and rotate pop-up dog parks.

Portable LED Screen: \$150,000 - \$250,000

Staff recommend purchasing a trailer-mounted LED screen to be used for the Movies in the Park Program. This would allow much greater flexibility for programming. The smaller footprint would allow it to be used in more locations, it does not require multiple staff to set up, it can be used during daytime hours and is not impacted by moderate wind events like an inflatable screen. Additionally, it could be used for other City

functions and events; it could even be rented out to special events to generate revenue. This is preferred over a less expensive inflatable screen that requires several staff to set up and would need to be anchored using extremely heavy weights or in-ground anchors which would severely limit where and how it could be used.

***Estimated total of one-time funding: \$167,931 for labor and supplies + \$250,000 for LED screen = \$443,833***

**Pilot Program Funding proposed as one-time for the remainder of 2021-2022 budget**

Increase 0.5 FTE Program Coordinator to 1.0 FTE: \$105,000

To provide the additional programming outlined, increasing the current 0.5 FTE Program Coordinator to 1.0 FTE would be necessary. With the added capacity, staff could coordinate, plan, and manage the additional programs. The cost shown would cover this increase through the remainder of the current budget cycle. If City Council wants to continue providing this level of service beyond the current budget, a Service Package would be submitted with the 2023-2024 budget.

Contingent Staff: \$45,000 - \$50,000/year

The remaining events, programs and services outlined above would require additional contingent or seasonal staff to support the implementation of the program or event.

SNAP EBT Matching Program: \$5,000/year

This funding would provide matching funds to help stretch SNAP EBT dollars. This would benefit individuals and families and also help support the farmers at the market.

***Estimated total of "pilot program" funding proposed as one-time = \$160,000***  
***Estimated amount of investment for 2021-2022 = \$603,833***

**Possible Funding Options**

- American Rescue Plan Act funding
- Excess revenues from 2020
- Waste Management funding from 2020: \$32,000
- Waste Management funding for 2021: \$32,000
- Waste Management funding for 2022: \$32,000
- Council reserve for inclusive events: \$32,000
- Potential Tourism Development Money
- Sponsorships and registration fees (Potentially \$50,000-\$60,000 of new revenue)

**NEXT STEPS**

Staff are seeking direction from Council on the following items:

- What questions, comments or suggestions does Council have?
- What level of interest does Council have in these investments, programs and events?
- Would Council support one-time funding for these investments, programs and events?