The Citizens Oversight Committee Message

Seattle's parks have enjoyed a great history of public support. Historic Olmsted parks such as Volunteer Park and Lake Washington Boulevard are cherished by Seattle residents. Public funding programs, such as the Forward Thrust bonds from the 1970s, which helped create Freeway Park and Gas Works Park, the Community Center Levies of the 1990s, and more recently the Pro Parks Levy, responsible for the award winning Ella Bailey Park and Cal Anderson Park, demonstrate the willingness of Seattle citizen's to tax themselves to provide for parks and recreation facilities. Many parks have become iconic symbols of their communities and all help create a well-loved park system and civic pride. Will the Maple Leaf or West Seattle reservoir parks or others projects funded by the Parks and Green Spaces Levy become the next park icons and community treasures?

The Committee's goal is to build on these past successes by carefully managing the $146 million Parks and Green Spaces Levy and keeping the support of Seattle citizens alive and active. The 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy projects are significant. Each project provides a positive impact on Seattle and on the thousands of users who enjoy all types of parks every day in Seattle.

Recently, Seattle Parks and Recreation has been scrutinized, as have so many public programs, for undertaking a large capital improvement program during such difficult economic times. The projects and programs in the levy are being developed over a six year period from 2009-2014, and it is anticipated that the economy will improve by the end of the program. While some people may now question the shortage of funding for maintenance and operation, this levy actually provides for renovation projects in existing parks such as the 23 neighborhood playgrounds, playfields improvements, and work that prolongs the use of important cultural facilities. This was not a deliberate trade-off (renovation in lieu of maintenance funds), but had some of the projects not been in the levy, those parks or facilities may have faced closure or removal because of safety issues.

Support and Involvement

The support for Seattle's parks continues to be incredible! Parks staff designs a public involvement plan for each project. The project is developed internally and with public input often gathered at public meetings. Attendance at the meetings varied from small numbers for neighborhood play area projects to projects that attract big crowds, such as the over 100 people attending the Bell Street Park meeting in January 2010 and the 140 people attending the Maple Leaf Reservoir Park meeting in February 2010. Community participation is essential. It fosters a sense of ownership and also often augments the project design. From public meetings, citizen's suggestions such as adult exercise equipment for Atlantic

Street Playground and distance marker for walkers installed at Delridge Playfield were incorporated into the design by Parks' project managers and landscape architects.

Public participation in the Opportunity Fund process exceeded expectations. Citizens attended four public information meetings held by Park staff in January 2010, and by April 2010 Parks had received almost 100 applications.

Development

Projects completed in 2009 provided much needed renovations to or replacement of park elements. In the first year of the levy, planning, design, and construction was completed for Atlantic Street Playground, Bayview Playground, Bhy Kracke Playground, Brighton Playground and playfield renovation projects at Lower Woodland #2 and #7. Parks also finished wetland and entry improvements at Magnuson Park and a beach restoration project at Chinook Beach Park, for a total of eight projects completed in 2009. Most of these were identified in the Seattle Jobs Forward Initiative, and provided jobs for local design and construction companies and their employees.

A total of 11 development projects were completed in 2010. Three projects with broader scopes include:

- The Seattle Children's PlayGarden (Colman Playground) project helped redevelop an older underutilized site into a year round facility for children with special needs.
- Camp Long Renovation brought new life to this important city facility; Parks renovated the 70 year old lodge basement into more usable classroom space, upgraded the kitchen, and installed a more energy efficient boiler.
- The Queen Anne Boulevard Improvements project continued the work from Pro Parks Levy funded project on this historic boulevard site.

Play area renovation projects at John C. Little, Sr. Park, Fairmount Playground, Lawton Park, Matthews Beach, and Seward Park provided renovated, ADA accessible play areas for each of these neighborhoods. Often the design reflected the character of the neighborhood, as in a ferry motif play structure at Fairmount Park Playground in West Seattle.

Playfield renovations included Delridge Playfield and Genesee Playfields #1 and #2. All renovated fields provided multi-sport facilities as Parks has sought to accommodate new trends in recreation such as Ultimate Frisbee and lacrosse. Work from 2010 continued on two other development projects that will be completed by the end of March 2011. These are the new Hubbard Homestead Park, which turned a former park and ride lot at Northgate into a large green urban park space, and the Sandel Playground play area.

Environmental Partnerships

Two programs from the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy have experienced thousands of volunteer hours through the Green Seattle Partnership and the longstanding community gardening partnership with the Department of Neighborhoods.

The Forest and Stream Restoration program through 2010 included work on the Kiwanis Ravine Restoration project and sites restored under the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) which, in some cases, combined with the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funded Urban Forestry GSP. Almost 16,000 adult volunteers and over 9,000 youth volunteers participated for a total of 95,316 volunteer hours in 70 parks across the city, helping bring another 126.1 acres into restoration. Through contracted work and volunteers' efforts, 12,000 seedlings and 30,000 native shrubs were planted in various parks and green spaces.

The P-Patch Community Garden program started in 1973 with Picardo Farm in northeast Seattle. Since then the program has been a shining example of volunteerism and defines "grass roots" community support. It is a popular and successful program with significant impact on many participants and surrounding communities (many P-patches donate to local food banks). The levy allocates $2 million for the P-Patch Community Gardens program and to date, levy funds are supporting development of 15 P-Patch community garden projects spread across Seattle to add at least 225 new plots. Four projects are complete, adding 50 new plots, at Spring Street in the Central Area, Marra Farm Pilot Market Garden Expansion in South Park, West Genesee in West Seattle and Hazel Heights in Fremont. Eight other projects are in process, three of which are at parks, and will add 179 new plots and 1/3 acre of "giving gardens" (plots for growing food to donate). These include P-Patch community gardens at Unpaving Paradise at the new Summit Slope Park on Capitol Hill, Bitter Lake P-Patch community garden at Bitter Lake Reservoir Park, and Kirke Park P-Patch community garden in Whittier Heights.

The Opportunity Fund

The $15 million Opportunity Fund provides funding for community initiated park development or property acquisition projects beyond those named in the levy. With guidance from Seattle City Council, the Levy Citizens Oversight Committee developed criteria for evaluating, nominating, and recommending a package of Opportunity Fund projects to the Mayor and City Council. Parks and the Oversight Committee received almost 100 project proposal applications.

Staff applied the developed criteria and made preliminary project proposal recommendations to the Oversight Committee. The Committee reviewed these recommendations and each of the proposals. At two public open houses held in June, 40 applicants presented two minute briefings of their projects, and over the course of two weekends in September the Oversight Committee and Parks staff toured the top 33 project proposal sites. After much deliberation and care, in December 2010 the Oversight Committee recommended a list of projects to the Mayor and City Council. In March 2011, City Council approved allocation of $7 million in the first cycle of the Opportunity Fund for 15 projects.

Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Oversight Committee were excited about the broad interest the community showed for the Parks & Green Spaces Levy Opportunity Fund.

Acquisitions

Neighborhood plans identify parks and green spaces as desirable elements for every Seattle community. In some cases, new park sites need to be acquired in these neighborhoods not only to provide space but

to offset the density of urban development or provide recreation opportunities for new communities. Ten acquisitions have been completed through the Parks and Green Spaces Levy to date, including new neighborhood park sites in three urban villages: Capitol Hill, Lake City and Fremont, and seven additional green space properties. Green space acquisitions include critical inholdings in the Me-Kwa-Mooks Natural Area, Duwamish Head Greenspace along SW Admiral Way, the last Thornton Creek parcel along NE 105th Street, and property donations on Fauntleroy Creek in West Seattle and Taylor Creek in Southeast Seattle.

Financial Picture

The 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy totals $146 million. As of the end of 2010, $26.66 million, or 18%, had been spent with many development and acquisition projects underway in 2011 and planned for 2012-2014.

Category	Levy Amount	Expenditures 2009-2010
Acquisition		
Green Space Acquisition	6,000,000	2,402,822
Neighborhood Park Acquisition	20,500,000	4,155,344
Acquisition Inflation	5,697,000	
Total	**32,197,000**	**6,558,167**
Development		
Cultural Facilities	11,500,000	256,928
Major Parks	10,950,000	2,816,066
Neighborhood Parks and Playgrounds	36,590,000	7,496,991
Playfields	10,500,000	6,618,467
Trails	7,250,000	155,068
Development Inflation	14,002,000	
Total	**90,792,000**	**17,343,519**
Environmental		
Community Food Gardens & P-Patches	2,000,000	644,072
Forest & Stream Restoration	4,100,000	1,871,768
Shoreline Access (Street Ends)	500,000	14,394
Environmental Inflation	1,410,000	
Total	**8,010,000**	**2,530,235**
Opportunity Fund		
Opportunity Fund	15,000,000	232,912
Total	**15,000,000**	**232,912**
Grand Total	**145,999,000**	**26,664,833**

Highlights

As we near the halfway point of the levy, Hubbard Homestead Park, Bell Street Park, West Seattle and Maple Leaf reservoir parks, and Jefferson Park phase II projects are a few of the highlights from this levy that will have a positive impact on their communities. Hubbard Homestead Park provides a much needed open space for the Northgate community. Bell Street Park develops a length of Bell Street from First to Fifth Avenue providing important green connections in downtown Seattle. The project, developed with the Seattle Department of Transportation, creates active park and recreation use. West Seattle and Maple Leaf reservoir parks are being developed with Seattle Public Utilities to provide parks on reservoir lids similar to previous Pro Parks Levy projects at Cal Andersen Park and Jefferson and Myrtle reservoirs. These projects will have considerable benefits to the communities by adding acres of new green space, and will be great additions the park system and neighborhoods. The levy provides funding for the further implementation of the Jefferson Park Master Plan. Following on the work from the Pro Parks Levy, this funding will improve the playfield, help develop an ecologically oriented

playscape, and add a new skatepark to this exciting park site. This park offers unparallel views and once complete will be an anchor for southeast Seattle.

Voters overwhelmingly approved the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy. Since that time Seattle Parks and Recreation staff have worked with other City departments and many citizens of Seattle to make all of the projects successful, meet the needs of the communities, and develop neighborhood pride. The levy program is on course and could not be possible without the great support that Parks and Recreation enjoys on so many levels.

Pete Spalding, Chair
Levy Citizens Oversight Committee

Levy Citizens Oversight Committee Members, 2009-2011

Neal Adams
Cindi Barker
Bruce Bentley
William Brosseau
Dennis Canty
Doug Dunham
Don Harper
Donna Hartmann-Miller
Terry Holme
Shanon Kearney
Cheryl Klinker
Sharon Lee
Michael Maddux
Joyce Moty
Joyce Pisnanont
Beth Purcell
Pete Spalding
Alec Stephens

Attachments