

BUILDING A VIBRANT COMMUNITY POSITION PAPER FOR SEATTLE PARKS FOUNDATION

Summarized below are the key positions Seattle Parks Foundation will be advocating for in 2010.

Provide access to parks for all Seattle residents

Seattle Parks Foundation believes equitable distribution of parks and green space resources is necessary to build a vibrant community. The intent of the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy to **address many current disparities in access to parks** should be fully supported.

Create a Central Waterfront for people

An historic opportunity exists to **transform Seattle's central waterfront into a series of spectacular parks and public spaces**. With the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, what is now a highway corridor designed almost exclusively for the automobile can become an active, green, and accessible civic space that connects downtown Seattle to its waterfront.

A great waterfront will:

- Provide a balanced mix of public spaces, including parks, a promenade, and places to support active and passive uses;
- Create pedestrian and bicycle connections from downtown and nearby neighborhoods to the waterfront;
- Provide a safe and enjoyable experience for downtown workers, area residents, and tourists;
- Blend smoothly with a vibrant mix of residential, retail, restaurant, cultural and other private uses;
- Complement and link adjacent cultural and tourist institutions;
- Take advantage of the scenic vistas from the waterfront; and
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.

To this end, Seattle Parks Foundation will support the urban planning solution to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct that:

- Provides for quality public space along the central waterfront;
- Allows for safe and accessible pedestrian connections;
- Minimizes automobile traffic, noise, and air pollution along the waterfront;
- Encourages alternate modes of transportation; and
- Provides a sound funding structure for parks and other public improvements.

Realign Mercer to provide access to Lake Union Park

Our current major urban park project, Lake Union Park, is a 12-acre waterfront park that opens access to 600 acres of "blue space" on Lake Union and will be a local park of regional significance that celebrates the history of our area, provides necessary green space for a growing city, and opens lake access for recreation. Seattle Parks Foundation secured over \$20 million in private dollars for Lake Union Park.

The completion of the Mercer Corridor Project is vital to the success of this new public park. Shifting the main flow of traffic to Mercer Street and creating a smaller and more pedestrian-friendly Valley Street will **make the entry to Lake Union Park more accessible, inviting, and safe**.

The Mercer Corridor Project will also build on existing work to create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections around Lake Union and between the lake and Elliott Bay. Portions of these two trails, the Cheshiahud Lake Union Loop and Lake to Bay Trail respectively, are integrated with the Mercer Corridor Project design, as this geographically small area is a vital transportation corridor for not just cars, but for people on foot and bike as well.

Finally, completion of the Mercer Project is vital to the successful transportation solution to the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct, providing for the opportunity to create a great public space along Seattle's Central Waterfront designed for people, not cars.

Fund operations and maintenance to complement 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy

Seattle Parks Foundation invested extensive staff and board resources into the successful passage of the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, including our executive director co-chairing the levy campaign. Our board member, Beth Purcell, also led the Council-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee, which created the package of projects for the levy. Seattle voters approved the parks levy by 59% during an election with 84% of registered voters showing up at the polls, proving strong support for parks.

While the Parks and Green Spaces Levy goes a long way to improving our public parks, it does not include maintenance and operations for existing or new facilities and open spaces. **It is imperative that the City continues adequate funding for maintaining Seattle's parks and green spaces** as an essential element of a vibrant community.

Connect existing parks in Bands of Green

Over 100 years ago, the Olmsted Brothers envisioned an interconnected system of parks and green spaces throughout Seattle. Today, the vision of these green connections lives on in the Bands of Green report released by Seattle Parks Foundation in 2007. The linear parks and trails recommended in the report will **connect neighborhoods in safe and enjoyable ways**, extending the green spaces throughout the city.

Cheshiahud Lake Union Loop

This 6.2-mile pedestrian and recreational path connects five neighborhoods and offers public access to 35 waterways and street ends along Lake Union. In 2007 and 2008 the City appropriated \$3.1 million total to support various projects along this route, including the development of a Master Plan. Continued City support for the master plan must continue in order to realize this vision of the community.

Lake to Bay Trail

The Lake to Bay Trail is a proposed one-mile route connecting Lake Union Park through Seattle Center to the Olympic Sculpture Park. Many city, state, and private stakeholders have projects along this cultural corridor, and cooperation among them is important to realize this path. Seattle Parks Foundation continues to advocate strongly for City involvement, cooperation, and support to complete the Lake to Bay Trail.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans

Seattle Parks Foundation supports the collective vision of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans as complementary visions to the Bands of Green report.

Create parks in every neighborhood

Neighborhood parks are the green core and gathering space of Seattle's communities. A vibrant community requires that all managers of open space work together to **create an equitable distribution of accessible parks throughout the city**.

Coordination with Public Agencies

Public parks and green spaces are owned by various agencies, from City of Seattle departments like Transportation, Parks, and Utilities to state institutions like the Department of Natural Resources, and the Seattle School District. As our city population increases and land becomes more scarce, local land managers need to work together to provide these resources to the public.

Neighborhood Matching Fund

Funding for the Department of Neighborhood's Matching Fund is an extremely useful tool for mobilizing the community around local improvement projects and is an effective and efficient way to use the City's resources to fulfill neighborhood plans and other civic projects.

Equitable Parkland Distribution

Parks are important to the quality of life for all Seattle's residents. Seattle Parks Foundation supports investments in neighborhoods lacking in safe, accessible, and quality green spaces so that everyone has green space within walking distance of their home.

Expand public/private partnerships for parks

Citizen support for public parks is evident in voting, volunteerism, and financial contributions. Seattle Parks Foundation is the city's premier nonprofit organization working system-wide to improve parks and green spaces. We do this through our partnerships with the City of Seattle's departments and the contributions of private individuals, foundations, and businesses.

About Seattle Parks Foundation

Seattle Parks Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization that improves, expands, and creates parks and green spaces, building a more vibrant community. The Parks Foundation is known nationwide as a leader in creating new partnerships and securing private resources to improve urban parks and green spaces. Since 2001 we have completed 29 projects, secured over \$28 million, and successfully advocated for nearly \$200 million in public funding for urban parklands. Currently the Parks Foundation has many projects underway, including the final phase of Lake Union Park, a 12-acre waterfront park in the heart of Seattle.

Seattle Parks Foundation maintains that high quality and accessible urban parks are essential to vibrant communities, a healthy population and environment, and a strong economy. Local government continues to be one of our most important partners, and supportive civic leadership is key to our mission.