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What will happen to trees under the proposed Park Bond?

by Barbara Johnstone, member of Save Shoreline Trees Advisory Board

Save Shoreline Trees has taken an in-depth look at Proposition 1, a General Obligation Bond of \$38.5 million for Park Improvements and Land Acquisition, on the Special Election ballot, April 27. If Proposition 1 passes, it will improve many of Shoreline's public parks and provide a fund to acquire additional park property. Save Shoreline Trees is not making a recommendation for or against Proposition 1. This article highlights park information and asks questions as we continue to advocate for trees. Links to City information are at the end of this article.

The Design Concepts or Elements for Shoreline's parks that were included in the City's Proposition 1 review do NOT identify which trees will or will not be preserved. The designs "evoke" what the parks will look like with the addition of non-tree amenities.

City Management Analyst Christina Arcidy, City Manager Debbie Tarry and Assistant City Manager John Norris, all say that the new design concepts will minimize the impact on existing trees *and* maintain maximum accessibility. We are not up against housing and commercial development here. Still, some mature trees will be lost while meeting code for utilities, drainage, etc., improving accessibility, and adding new design elements (see below) to our parks, as well as staying within budget. The latter two are non-negotiable (the elements come from a long process that included community involvement, and the budget is capped. There is some flexibility (keeping within code) about how the elements will be developed.

Sidewalks. The width of sidewalks within the parks to save trees is a bit negotiable. As much as possible, the city will do 'best practice' of eight-foot sidewalks for mixed use and accessibility, but according to both the City Management Analyst and the Assistant City Manager, it is possible to have paths meander around significant trees and to have the width in places be reduced to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-minimum requirement of three feet to save trees.

Tree planting. About one-hundred conifer and deciduous trees are estimated to be planted. The varieties will be in accordance with the City's Urban Forest Strategic Plan.

Land acquisition. Land will be purchased in the light-rail station areas and elsewhere in accordance with the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan. Land acquisition may be limited by what opportunities become available and by matching grant program requirements. Acquisition plans include expansions for the pocket Rotary Park (near 185th Street Station), for Paramount Open Space (Ridgecrest neighborhood) and for Brugger's Bog Park (in Ballinger). It is expected that there will be others.

If the bond measure passes, then, monitoring and advocating for trees will be very important. Further design will be paid for and completed only if Proposition 1 passes. That is the time at which individual trees will be looked at and decisions made about incorporating them into final designs. There will be opportunity for public input in formats that have not yet been planned, but in the past have included on-line feedback, open houses with back-and-forth discussion and feedback, as well as emails, phone calls and letters.

Here is an initial look at highlights of the individual parks and specific concerns to watch for.

Brugger's Bog Park

Much of this park in Ballinger, including the playground, is under water several months of the year. There are beautiful large trees here that can be appreciated more with the proposed perimeter trail. New design elements also include a relocated playground, new multi-sports court, new restroom, and additional landscaping and a sidewalk. City Management Analyst Christina Arcidy reviewed aerial maps and said it did not appear any trees would be impacted by the planned frontage improvements.

SST questions: It does not appear that the trail will require removing significant trees, but this should be checked as the design is developed. Confirm trees are not threatened by the new sidewalk planned for 25th Avenue NE. Also, will significant trees be removed for other amenities? How much of the additional landscaping is conifers and will it include other native trees?

James Keough Park

This small park in Meridian Park is so wet that most of it is not usable eight months of the year. In the center of the park is a chain-link fence around a dilapidated, overgrown tennis court. The playground has been removed. The park runs next to I-5 and there is no visual or sound barrier, only a few scattered trees. The lack of parking onsite is a problem for neighbors. Design elements to be incorporated include replacing the old play area and adding a new off-leash dog area, picnic shelter, perimeter trail, restroom, and parking. Plans include improving drainage and planting more trees, both around the perimeter and around the off-leash area. The park will be significantly improved visually and for useability with these amenities added and removal of the eyesore in the center.

SST questions: In the current Design Concept, adding parking would entail removing a straight row of approximately sixteen significant trees, including one large Madrone. Can these trees be saved with diagonal parking? Or by parking on the south side of N. 167th Street? Will any significant trees on the other three sides of the park going be removed? (There are not many.) What varieties of additional trees are proposed?

Briarcrest Community Park

This park is carved out of Hamlin Park to create an amenity for Briarcrest with an enhanced entry from the neighborhood on 25th Avenue NE. New design elements include converting one of two ballfields into lawn, and a new play area, splash pad, picnic shelter and perimeter trail.

SST questions: At the entrance, it appears several significant trees would be removed, including a large Madrone. How can the entrance be adjusted to save more significant trees? Where will the perimeter trail be located? Will it endanger surrounding trees? Will the new play area be moved enough to endanger trees?

Kruckeberg Botanic Garden

The bond measure would fund investments at Kruckeberg Botanic Garden on 15th Avenue NW.

The new design (worked on for years by the Kruckeberg Foundation) will make the education center and children's garden accessible to people of all abilities. The existing trees will remain.

A raised wooden walkway suitable for wheelchairs will ramp into the garden and across it, where existing trails are. Note: The raised walkway is many times more expensive than a concrete path and the bond will not come close to paying for it. The Kruckeberg Foundation is looking at ways to raise additional sums for this project. No new parking or sidewalks are in the plan.

Richmond Highlands Park

This park is home to Shoreline's specialized recreational program. New design elements include additional sidewalks, converting one of two ball fields to lawn, replacing the existing playground with a fully accessible all-ages playground, new multi-sport court, new picnic shelter and new perimeter and sensory trails.

SST questions: Trees are a concern with all the new construction and expanded parking here.

What specific trees are identified for removal? Are there work-arounds? What are the replacement plans? Is the cluster of trees—a number of them Landmark-sized (thirty inches or more in diameter at breast height)—preserved near the existing play equipment?

Hillwood Park

New design elements will replace the multi-sport court, expand the playground with adventure features, add landscaping and a new splash pad, picnic shelter and perimeter trail.

SST concern: As in all cases, it will be important to track specific trees identified for removal and whether there are work-arounds to establish the new elements.

Paramount Open Space

There is the potential to purchase an adjoining property in Ridgecrest. The park will remain Open Space, and improvements include removing unsafe hazards (including unsafe trees) on the new property.

Shoreview Park

New design elements for this park at 700 NW Innis Arden Way include upgrading the off-leash dog area, converting the dirt soccer field to grass and improving the play area.

SST concern: It seems unlikely trees surrounding these areas will be endangered but, as always, the designs should be reviewed if the bond measure passes.

Ridgecrest Park

Amenities for this park—north of 161st Street and next to I-5 and light rail—include a new off-lease dog area and a play area.

SST note: There are no trees except on the east edge of this little park and they are not threatened.

Rotary Park

This pocket park at the NW corner of NE 185th Street and 10th Avenue NE in North City is near the light-rail station. It may be expanded, and there is the possibility that play equipment will be added.

SST concern: Can the play area be designed to incorporate the existing trees?

Additional park land acquisitions in light-rail station areas and other parts of the city

SST note: We will wait to see what land is acquired and what tree advocacy may be needed.

City of Shoreline links

[Ballot Language and City Presentation of Proposition 1](#)

[Parks, Recreation, and Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#)

[Shoreline Park Information and Locations](#)

[Urban Forest Strategic Plan](#)

Contact Information

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