



Parks and Recreation Department City of Bellingham

MEMORANDUM

To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
From: Peter Gill, Planning and Development Coordinator
CC: Nicole Oliver, Parks & Recreation Director and Laine Potter, Parks Development Manager
Subject: Greenways Annual Report 2022
Date: February 3, 2023

The Greenways Advisory Committee is charged with strategic oversight and recommendations regarding the use of Greenways funds. In accordance with BMC 2.20.040 a Greenways report is presented to the Bellingham City Council annually. The presentation addresses recent accomplishments, levy expenditures, ongoing and pending projects, and future priorities. The report is being presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board prior to a presentation to the City Council Parks on February 27, 2023. A summary of the presentation is provided here.

2022 Year End Summary

The presentation to City Council summarizes the last year of Greenways Advisory Committee (Committee) work, the use of Greenways funds in 2022, and existing and future priorities. The Committee was productive in 2022, and highlights include developing an adopted [2022-2026 Greenways Strategic Plan](#), collaborating with Parks staff to map future acquisitions, and taking six field trips. Below is a discussion of accomplishments as they relate to the Greenways Strategic Plan goals.

Goal 1: acquire property which connects parks, neighborhoods, open space and habitat across Bellingham and its urban growth area

2022 was an active year for [property acquisitions](#). With the real estate market beginning to slow, Greenways funds were leveraged to purchase eight new properties and easements well distributed across the city. Approximately \$2.1 million in Greenways funds were spent to acquire 42 acres of open space and park land. These acquisitions included properties in the Silver Creek, Squalicum Creek, Padden Creek, and Chuckanut Creek greenway corridors.

Goal 2: Develop and restore public parks, open space, trails, and the natural environment

The use of Greenways funds to develop parks and trails included completion of a new ballfield at [Squalicum Creek Park](#) (combined with PIF and RCO grant funds), design of access and public safety improvements to the [Pier at Little Squalicum Park](#), and removal of a house at [Happy Valley Park](#). Significant progress was made on other Greenways funded projects including the Civic Athletic Complex planning and feasibility assessment, [Boulevard Park shoreline enhancement](#), North Chuckanut Trailhead study, and [Sunset Pond loop trail](#). Greenways funds also contributed to continued work on the City's forthcoming [Urban Forestry Management Plan](#). Roughly \$507,000 was spent on development objectives in 2022.

Goal 3: Maintain greenways, open space sites, parks, park facilities and trails

Greenways funds both supported maintenance staff in the Park Operations Division as well as facilitated capital maintenance projects. Fourteen full time employees were funded in our trails, grounds, forestry, and stewardship groups. Maintenance work on structures included the [Arroyo Park bridge](#) repair design and work at [Woodstock Farm](#) including Cooks house demolition and abatement, a historic structure report for the Gates house, and an ADA assessment at Woodstock Farm. Another Strategic Plan objective of Goal 3 is to improve monitoring of park conditions and use. Eleven trail counters are currently stationed across the City to better understand access, visitation patterns, and usage. Greenways spending on Park Operations staff and materials totaled approximately \$1 million, with another \$90,000 going toward maintenance projects.

Greenways Priorities for 2023 and Beyond

Property purchases in 2023 will focus on increasing connectivity between existing greenways and parks, as well as protection of contiguous open space and habitat corridors. \$2.5 million of Greenways funds are budgeted for acquisition in 2023. Design is underway for new multimodal trails in the Irongate, King Mountain, and Cordata neighborhoods. Current Greenways funded capital projects in the 2023 work plan include Hundred Acre Wood Phase 1 improvements, community garden improvements and expansion, safety and access improvements to the Pier at Little Squalicum Park, Boulevard Park Shoreline Enhancement, [Little Squalicum Park bridge and trail](#), and Arroyo Park bridge repairs. The Park Operations division will soon implement SeeClickFix to improve tracking and response to reported maintenance issues in parks and trails.

Committee work will continue to look toward streamlining the acquisition process, mapping and prioritizing properties of interest, and improving connectivity with green-gray trail mapping and wayfinding. With the existing Greenways 4 Levy expiring in 2023, Committee members and staff will focus on highlighting past accomplishments and identifying community priorities for

improvement within the existing park and trail system as well as opportunities for expansion. Community needs, greenway distribution and equity, regional trail networks, and project priorities will continue to be discussed at 2023 Committee meetings.