



MEMORANDUM

Date: September 3, 2015
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susanne Rockwell, Strategic Advisor
Subject: Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines – Revisions II

Requested Board Action

This briefing paper recaps the public engagement process and a proposed change to the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines. No Board action is requested at the September 10 Board meeting; timing for a Board recommendation is expected to be part of the discussion on September 10.

Proposed Revisions since July 23

Based on comments received at the Park Board's July 23 meeting, and written comments, staff have revised the Use Guidelines with one additional revision, a new criterion in the Habitat and Preservation section addressing cumulative impacts:

4.2.5 Assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed use on the location where the use is proposed and on the City's system of greenbelts and natural areas.

(Please note earlier revisions were listed in the July 20, 2015 Park Board briefing memo, included as Attachment 1 to this briefing paper.)

Public Engagement Recap

Between February and April, Parks engaged the public in a robust information gathering and discussion effort with the public which consisted of several major components:

1. Media announcements and an Interactive Community Blog
2. Invitational Focus Group sessions
3. Mini-Summit - Panel Discussion and Open House
4. Public Hearing – to date, 90 emails/letters have been received and 34 individuals testified

Public Engagement Schedule

- January 21 – June - Media announcements and email notices
- February 6 – April 8 – Interactive Community Blog/survey questions through MindMixer platform
- March 19, 21, 26 – Invitational Focus Group sessions
- April 4 - Mini-Summit - Panel Discussion and Open House
- June 4 – Draft Supplemental Use Guidelines released for public review
- June 25 - Public Hearing
- July – Revisions to the Use Guidelines based upon public comments and extension of the public comment period to September

Media coverage included the following articles/programs:

1. My Northwest - [Tension between city, advocates growing over Seattle green space | MyNorthwest.com](#)
2. KIRO Radio - [#FactCheck: The real reason activists are fighting Seattle's Parks Department | Kiro Radio](#)
3. King 5 News - [Seattle parks plan will share natural areas' futures | King5 News](#)

Chart of Public Engagement Participation

Event	Participation	Of note
<p>Interactive Community Blog – The interactive blog launched in early-February and was open to the public through April 8.</p>	<p>272 individuals commented and interacted with other community members in this forum.</p> <p>The blog consisted of several questions pertaining to priorities and use of natural areas and greenbelts.</p>	<p>The following neighborhoods contributed the majority of comments in this forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lake City 2. Laurelhurst 3. Phinney/Greenwood 4. Beacon Hill/Rainier Beach 5. West Seattle
<p>Invitational Focus Group Sessions – Groups/organizations were contacted by Parks Consultants and encouraged to send a representative to one of four available dates.</p> <p>Facilitated small group discussions allowed for the identification of overarching priorities and the development of supporting actions items that reflect/incorporate those priorities.</p>	<p>52 groups/organizations participated in the sessions, six of which serve historically underrepresented communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Conservation Association • Immigrant and Refugee Commission • Seattle Goodwill • Neighborhood House • Nature Consortium • Rainier Vista – Cheasty process 	<p>76 organizations were contacted, including 15 that work with historically underrepresented populations.</p> <p>The focus group sessions were listening opportunities for Seattle Parks and Recreation and were not consensus driven.</p>
<p>Mini-Summit and Open House – The Mini-Summit included a panel discussion and Q/A. Five guest speakers with varying viewpoints on natural areas and greenbelts participated in a moderated discussion; responding to questions from the audience.</p> <p>The Open House portion of the day included information boards and comments sheets.</p>	<p>100 individuals signed in to participate in the Mini-Summit.</p> <p>31 groups/organizations participated in the Open House portion of the Mini-Summit, showcasing the work that they do in our natural areas and greenbelts.</p>	<p>Guest Speakers for the panel discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Barber • Merica Whitehall • Marty Westerman • Peg Staeheli • Mark Jordan • Charlie Zaragoza (moderator)

Additional Information

susanne.rockwell@seattle.gov

Project web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/NaturalAreaGreenbeltUse/default.htm>



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 20, 2015
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susanne Rockwell, Strategic Advisor
Subject: Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines – Revisions

Requested Board Action

This briefing paper describes proposed changes to the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines. No action from the Board is requested at the July 23 meeting; staff will request a recommendation from the Board in September.

Project Background

During the review process for the Cheasty Pedestrian and Mountain Bike Trail Pilot Project, it became clear that Seattle Parks and Recreation did not have established criteria to evaluate a use proposed for a Natural Area or Greenbelt. In order to have criteria in place for future proposals, Parks and Recreation initiated the process to develop Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines.

The intent of the Guidelines is to evaluate the potential impacts of uses proposed for Natural Areas and Greenbelts. The checklist proposed for this evaluation requests information in the following categories:

1. Habitat
2. Environmental Preservation
3. Education, Access and Public Safety
4. Recreation, and
5. Acquisition

It is the underpinning of the Use Guidelines that a decision whether to move forward with a proposed use must balance all of these factors.

(Additional information, including a review of the public outreach process, was provided in the June 25, 2015 briefing paper, available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks-and-recreation/about-us/board-of-park-commissioners>)

Proposed Revisions

Based on comments received at the Park Board's June 25 meeting, and written comments, staff have revised the Use Guidelines.

Preamble Added: The City has been blessed by the incredible efforts of thousands of volunteers working to restore the urban forest, with over 700,000 hours spent caring for the land. A preamble has been added to celebrate this effort and make clear that Parks and Recreation's promulgation of the Use Guidelines will not detract from past or future restoration efforts.

4.0 Policy Section: This section was revised to state that the Use Guidelines will *not* supersede adopted ordinances or policies. The Use Guidelines add guidance for implementing existing policies/regulations, but do not supersede them.

Process Illustration Added: To help explain the process for approving new uses in Natural Areas and Greenbelts, including review by the Park Board, the Guidelines now include a chart showing the path to approval/denial for a proposal.

Checklist Changes:

- Clarified the proponent’s responsibility to provide a detailed proposal description and explain how the “yes” responses are supported
- Added Environmental Preservation Section
- Added criteria to Recreation Section
 - asking about community support for the proposal, and
 - asking if alternate locations have been considered, including non-Parks and Recreation property
- Regarding alternate locations, the Guidelines state:
 - If the purpose of the proposed use can be met at an alternate location, then a location in a Natural Area or Greenbelt should be considered only as a last resort.

What Hasn’t Changed

A major point of those who oppose the proposed Use Guidelines is that the Guidelines are inconsistent with the City’s 1993 Greenspaces Policy. The 1993 Policy allows “low impact activities” in greenspaces, but does not specify what types of uses qualify as low impact. The proposed Guidelines interpret “low impact” to mean those activities with a low impact on the environment, leaving the decision on which uses will be allowed to individual proposal evaluation pursuant to the criteria.

Keeping the door open to a range of uses with a low impact on habitat and forest preservation remains consistent with the Parks and Recreation position, as stated in the proposed Preamble of the Guidelines, to balance:

- Preserving and enhancing forest habitat, tree canopy and water quality,
- Increasing environmental education and stewardship,
- Getting youth engaged and involved in their environment,
- Providing recreation opportunities for our changing needs,
- Ensuring equitable access to all park land, including Natural Areas and Greenbelts, and
- Enhancing positive use.

Schedule

July 23, 2015: Park Board discussion of Natural Area and Greenbelt Use Guidelines

September 10 or 24: Park Board recommendation

Additional Information

susanne.rockwell@seattle.gov

Project web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/NaturalAreaGreenbeltUse/default.htm>