

Arboretum Master Plan

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ARBORETUM MASTER PLAN NARRATIVE

In May 2001, the Seattle City Council approved the long-range master plan for the Washington Park Arboretum that will serve as a road map for improvements at the Arboretum for the next 20 years.

Seattle Parks and Recreation, the University of Washington and the Arboretum Foundation developed the plan over the last seven years.

Based on comments from the public and the Board of Park Commissioners, the Council amended the plan slightly, and included implementation guidelines that specify design and construction considerations as the plan is implemented.

"The master plan strikes just the right balance between the Washington Park Arboretum's functions as a renowned horticultural collection and as a treasured park," said Ken Bounds, Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

The master plan ensures the Washington Park Arboretum will effectively fulfill three primary purposes—conservation, recreation and education—for decades to come. Key elements include renovation of 30 existing plant exhibits and creation of 21 new plant exhibits; reorientation of some pedestrian trails; construction of a pedestrian/bicycle trail along Lake Washington Blvd.; renovation and expansion of existing facilities in the vicinity of the Graham Visitors Center; construction of a new pavilion and entrance to the Japanese Garden; addition of two pedestrian overpasses, one across Lake Washington Blvd. and one across Foster Island Dr.; traffic flow improvements; and other minor modifications.

The plan results from collaboration among Seattle Parks and Recreation, the University of Washington, and the Arboretum Foundation, and the Arboretum's neighbors and supporters. The plan was the subject of extensive public review and comment. Since 1994, more than 4,500 citizens commented through public workshops and meetings, focus groups, forums, open houses, public hearings and the environmental review process – and all of these comments have helped shape the final plan.

PLAN BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The first plan for the Washington Park Arboretum was developed in 1936 by James Dawson of the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm. The next master plan for the Washington Park Arboretum was adopted in 1978. In 1994, the Arboretum and Botanic

Garden Committee (ABGC) launched a master planning process to develop a strategy to guide the Arboretum well into the 21st century. The master plan responds to a host of issues that have arisen during the past 20 years concerning collections, traffic, conservation, education, public safety, recreation, and visitor services. Some of the original plant collections have matured and many trees are dying. These natural resources require improved conditions and special care to thrive. Barrier-free access to public spaces needs to be updated to meet legal requirements. Visitor services, security, and educational and community programs are essential to the Arboretum's public service mission.

ARBORETUM BACKGROUND

The Washington Park Arboretum is a 230-acre unique "special purpose park" that is both an urban refuge and a place where trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants are cultivated for conservation, scientific and educational purposes.

The Washington Park Arboretum is owned and operated cooperatively by the City of Seattle and the University of Washington, with the support of the Arboretum Foundation. The City owns most of the land and the buildings, maintains the roads, pathways, lawn areas, lighting, and other park-like functions. The University owns, designs, and maintains the plant collections and displays, and offers educational programs. The Foundation is a nonprofit, membership organization that provides funding and volunteer support.

Representatives from the City, the U.W., and the Foundation, and a Governor's appointee, serve on the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC), which is charged with assisting "in establishing and maintaining said arboretum and botanical garden, in securing funds for the operation and maintenance of said arboretum, and in acting as liaison committee."

IMPLEMENTATION

Seattle Parks and Recreation is now working with the U.W. and the Arboretum Foundation to implement the master plan. The estimated cost of improvements is \$45 million. As a first step, Seattle Parks will make some infrastructure improvements to the Arboretum as part of a project funded by \$2.2 million from the 2000 Pro Parks Levy.

MORE INFORMATION

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