

**Lake Washington Boulevard Vegetation Management Plan
Frequently Asked Questions
April 2007**

How does the Vegetation Management Plan process work?

VMPs are plans for managing for the care and replacement of existing vegetation and for creating guidelines for additions or decreases in vegetation to meet the goals of existing Parks plans or design intents - they are not intended as design processes.

Parks works from existing design intents for developed parklands and our urban forest program goals for undeveloped parklands. Lake Washington has both types of areas, and we drew from the existing documents including Olmsted papers, EDAW plans, the draft Urban Forest Management Plan, and Green Seattle Partnership documents to present the goals for management of the vegetation in these areas. The public process gives citizens opportunities to comment on our management strategies and to interpret of the design intent; it is not intended to redefine citywide goals or park-specific design intents.

How does Parks plan to extend the public involvement process?

The public comment period on the first draft VMP ended January 31, 2007. The first draft, along with the complete Shannon and Wilson geologist report, is available online at: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkspaces/LakeWashingtonBlvd/vmp.htm>

Parks staff are now working to develop a second draft of the VMP. Updates to the first draft will include:

- Clarification of technical language
- Updated drawings that reflect the plans potential visual impacts
- An appendix containing the full geotechnical report for the project
- Tree inventory maps
- Language reflecting agreements made with the community during the initial public process.

Parks staff will enhance the production of this second draft VMP with the participation of a Project Advisory Team (PAT) comprised of leaders from citizen groups that have expressed strong interest in the VMP.

The Board of Park Commissioners hearing for the VMP, originally scheduled for March 8, has been postponed and will be rescheduled. Parks staff will work to update the VMP through April. Starting in May Parks staff, with the assistance of a facilitator, will meet with the PAT to review this second draft of the VMP.

Revisions to the draft from this process will be posted to the website late summer/early fall 2007. The second draft VMP will be presented at a 9th public meeting slated for fall 2007, and Parks will reopen the public comment period when this second draft is released.

The next public meeting will be announced by mail at a minimum of three weeks before the meeting date. Please check your mail carefully, as bulk mailing of fliers is the only cost-effective way for Parks to advertise these meetings to homeowners in the area. To

save money and trees, if you provide us with your e-mail address, we will notify you that way.

Why does the draft VMP contemplate removing cherry trees and replacing them with tall conifers? Why does it call for replacing cherry trees with other species?

The cherry trees in the Boulevard unit are not slated to be replaced by tall native trees. The Boulevard tree replacement map found on p.36 of the draft VMP shows the areas where the majority of the cherry trees are planted to have replacements drawn from among the small flowering trees on the Open Typology tree palette.

Found on p.39, this palette includes lovely ornamental species, such as star magnolia, Eastern redbud and Japanese snowbell. A "disease-resistant cherry cultivar" will be added to the Open Typology tree palette in the second draft VMP. Any changes to existing tree composition would come when the trees need to be replaced because they are dying, becoming hazardous, or are diseased to the point of becoming an aesthetic blight. Parks continues to work with the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival Committee on this plan and is meeting with cherry experts from Japan this month on cultivar selection.

The problem with the existing cherries is that they - like many ornamental cherries - have a number of disease and insect problems in our local environment. Should these problems such as the Cherry Bark Tortrix build up in the ornamental cherry population, they could become a major problem for other Rose family plants such as our native cherry and crabapple trees.

Should large trees be planted on the slide-prone slopes adjacent to Lake Washington Boulevard?

Shannon and Wilson, a local Geotechnical and Environmental Consulting firm, has recommended as a planning guideline "that the large tree plantings be limited to the flatter slopes (<70 percent or 35 degrees) to reduce the risk of blow down and (2) that the large trees only be planted on the lower one-third of a slope." This guideline will be incorporated into the second draft VMP.

Why are you increasing canopy cover on the lakeside? How much lawn will remain if all of the VMP were to be implemented today?

Several City, County, and State studies indicate the Lake Washington shoreline as an important area for restoration to native vegetation in order to help in threatened Chinook salmon recovery efforts.

There is limited publicly-owned shoreline along the Lake to enhance salmon and migratory bird habitat. Much of the shoreline is already being aggressively covered by invasive plant species such as blackberry and Japanese knotweed. These plants do not provide the desired cover and food web elements for salmon or for a wide variety of migratory birds. Areas currently infested with invasive plants will be prioritized for restoration in the second draft VMP.

For areas along Lake Washington Boulevard, limited planting increases are slated for high recreation use areas such as the SeaFair viewing area, with more plantings of shrub vegetation approaching Seward Park. In the Stan Sayres area, shrub canopy cover is slated for 20% - this means that 80% of the land will be left open for grass or grass with shade trees. A 20% tree canopy cover is called out for this area. In many

areas, tree and shrub canopy will overlap so the total canopy cover for trees and shrubs will be significantly less than 40% for this area, leaving a minimum of 60% of the area with no tree or shrub canopy at all.

When are you planning to install the new plantings?

The VMP is a set of guidelines for installing projects as funding becomes available. There is currently no funding to implement projects along the Boulevard other than the existing Pro Parks Levy projects and neighborhood-funded Madrona Creek Daylighting project.

There are two ways to initiate projects that use the plan guidelines: one is for interested citizens to seek grant funding or provide private funding, and the other is through the Green Seattle Partnership. The Green Seattle Partnership is currently at capacity for initiating new projects based on current municipal funding levels.

I don't understand how the VMP's tree spacing protocols work. What will the tree spacing look like when you integrate all three management units?

This plan does not call for removing existing plantings, but rather outlines guidelines for future planting projects. In the long term the plan calls for increased spacing of Boulevard trees or "street trees." The plan calls for a modification of the management of slopes trees – allowing for increased spacing between large trees, but allowing for some of those trees to express their full height and growth form without being topped. For the lakeside management unit, minor increases to canopy are called for in the northern lakeside areas where peak recreation activities occur, with a greater increase in canopy called for, particularly shrub canopy toward the Seward Park area.

Susan Black and Associates, a local landscape architecture firm, will create interpretive images for the next round of public process that integrate the draft plan's spacing protocols across all management units with example drawings from at least three areas along the Boulevard. A second set of drawings will illustrate current conditions. These drawings will be essential to our continued public involvement process.

Why would you plant more trees if no citizens desire more trees in this area?

We have received a very large volume of response to the draft plan requesting that either more or fewer trees be planted along this highly valued Parks property. A significant amount of this response comes from citizens living in the Seward Park, Mt. Baker, and Leschi communities who walk the Boulevard regularly both for exercise and to observe wildlife. These responses point to the variety of user groups this plan seeks to serve, and to the variety of values we strive to balance in planning for this area. Here are a few excerpts from letters we have received to this end:

"I feel that the plan does not reflect how the boulevard and lakeside parks are used today or the current needs of the people who live in Seattle. The underlying Olmsted vision may have been appropriate when Seattle was little more than a booming frontier town with a small population and a Victorian aesthetic. However, today Seattle is a large city with a growing population in a densely populated county. As open spaces become rarer, people look to the parks to provide open vistas and lawns where they can relax, enjoy the sun (on rare occasions), have a picnic or wade the lake."

"I am a Lake Washington Blvd. resident. Seven years ago I bought my home for its beautiful views of our northwest landscape and wildlife. I am thrilled that Seattle City Parks Department has taken these bold (and necessary) steps to enhance our native wildlife habitat. This plan will create "islands" of native plantings that will increase eagle, owl and bat habitat as well as provide the shade necessary to restore salmon runs in the lake...We cannot, and should not, restore our parks to how they looked in 1903; but we must try to restore and maintain our public lands to a level that will facilitate the recovery of migratory birds and fish."

We hope, through the work of the Project Advisory Team, to bring people together in support of a plan that balances these ideals, as we clearly have a very engaged citizenry who care deeply about this space.

For questions regarding this continuing process, please call Katie Moller at 233-5019, or e-mail her at Katie.moller@seattle.gov.