



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 21, 2021
To: Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners
From: Selena Elmer, Strategic Advisor, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Subject: Long-Term Temporary Use Change on Green Lake Inner Loop

Requested Board Action

The Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners will hold a public hearing on Thursday, October 28 about a proposed long-term use change on the inner loop at Green Lake Park to restrict bicycles and other wheeled uses. This use restriction has been in effect since April 2020. SPR is seeking to implement a longer-term temporary use change until the Seattle Department of Transportation can complete analysis and community engagement regarding building a complete outer loop for bicyclists around Green Lake. At the upcoming meeting, SPR will be seeking input from the public about this use change, and pending input received, potentially seeking a recommendation from the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners on this recommended policy change.

Proposed Policy Change

SPR is proposing to restrict all bicycles, skateboards, roller blades, and other wheeled recreation uses from using the inner loop at Green Lake Park until further notice. This would not apply to a person with a disability who uses wheeled equipment or people walking with strollers. This use change requires modifying Seattle Parks and Recreation Policy 060-P 7.13.1.1 – Supplemental Use Guidelines for Green Lake Park Green Lake Courtesy Code (Appendix 8.1, referenced in Section 4.3.5). The official use change SPR would file with the City Clerk's office is outlined in Attachment 1.

A version of this restriction has been in effect since April 2020, which SPR has been renewing through an emergency rulemaking procedure which expires every sixty days. This proposed longer-term temporary policy change would keep this temporary use restriction in effect until the Superintendent deems it appropriate to take further action. This longer-term change is intended to provide time for the Seattle Department of Transportation to complete supplemental analysis about creating a complete outer loop around Green Lake with protected access for bikers and pedestrians, which is anticipated to be complete in the next two to three years.

Consistent with prior precedent and rulemaking procedure laid out in the Seattle Municipal Code, SPR posted formal notice about this public hearing in the Daily Journal of Commerce on September 28 and issued a press release and Parkways blog post on the same day, which was circulated to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners listserv.

Background

History of Green Lake Use Change

In April 2020, early in the pandemic, SPR temporarily restricted bicycles, roller blades, and other wheeled forms of recreation from the inner loop at Green Lake Park and directed all foot traffic to travel in one direction. The Green Lake inner loop is consistently one of the most heavily used amenities across SPR's system. When COVID-19 first emerged, there was a Citywide effort to implement policy changes

and augment physical infrastructure to facilitate safe public access to outdoor amenities, which included considering measures to prevent crowding and ensure visitors could maintain safe social distancing when using SPR amenities. Initially, SPR both restricted wheeled recreational uses on the inner loop and required all pedestrians to travel the same direction along the inner loop. Effective July 30, 2021, SPR relaxed the one direction requirement, and pedestrian traffic is now allowed in both directions on the loop.

This use change at Green Lake was one of a suite of measures SPR put in place to reduce crowding and ensure SPR's outdoor amenities could remain open for safe public use and enjoyment during the pandemic. Other measures included posting information signage, disseminating key messaging via social media, adjusting park hours, deploying Social Distance Ambassadors to monitor use of major regional parks, restricting activities that promote larger gatherings like beach fires and picnic shelter rentals, and more. Another strategy to increase access to open space was undertaken jointly with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) through an extension of the Stay Healthy Streets initiative specific to roadways adjacent to parks. This joint effort, called Keep Moving Streets, included [closing a stretch](#) of West Green Lake Way North between North 63rd St and E Green Lake Way N to vehicle traffic from May 2020 to September 2021. The goal of this program was to open up more space for people rather than cars as a way to provide more space for people to get outside adjacent to parks and to improve community and individual health.

Public Reaction

Public reaction to the use restrictions at Green Lake has been mixed. SPR has not conducted any tailored outreach related to the use change but has received periodic comments through social media, our central email address, and resident phone calls. Early in the pandemic, the feedback was largely positive as park users felt that moving one direction and limiting use to pedestrians assisted with social distancing in a time of great uncertainty. As the pandemic progressed, SPR has received many requests for clearer and more permanent signage, as many temporary signs have been removed throughout the pandemic. Several residents expressed strong support for restricting wheeled uses, feeling that the mix of bikers, roller bladers, and pedestrians results in unsafe situations and crowding. Others have indicated skepticism about the effectiveness of this change without enforcement, citing that bikers still use the loop and don't stay in their designated lane, possibly creating more hazardous situations.

Prior Discussion with Board

SPR staff briefed the (then) Board of Park Commissioners about this use change in January 2021, seeking input on whether to continue with the emergency rulemaking procedure or pursue a longer-term temporary rule change. At that time, the Board recommended continuing with the emergency procedure until the path to recovery from the pandemic was clearer. Since that time, the emergence of the Delta variant has extended uncertainty regarding the length and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new protected bike lane around the east side of the lake has been completed, and additional plans for further analysis of a potential full outer loop around the lake have been formed (see below).

Concurrent SDOT Activity

In parallel with Citywide activities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, SDOT was completing the [Green Lake and Wallingford Paving and Multi-Modal Improvement](#) project, which included building

a new 2-way bike lane around the lake, among many other improvements (map included to the right).

Through community engagement related to this project, SDOT staff have heard many comments from community who are interested in creating a full outer loop for users to walk and bike around the lake, including potentially repurposing the eastern-most lake of Aurora Ave N adjacent to the lake. SDOT staff plan to conduct additional community engagement and analysis to understand what may be feasible before sharing outcomes and concepts with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), SDOT’s partner in this corridor.

Public Involvement Process

At this point, SPR has not conducted any community engagement specific to this issue. SDOT has conducted significant public engagement in support of the Green Lake and Wallingford Paving and Multi-Modal Improvement project and hopes to build on this work by talking with neighbors about opportunities to expand a walking and biking path connecting around the lake. SDOT staff will hold a virtual open house on Tuesday, November 9th to share project information to community and get feedback and are also developing a community survey for additional input.

SPR Recommendation

SPR recommend implementing this temporary use change on a longer-term basis while SDOT completes its analysis and public engagement regarding a potential full outer loop and basing the longer-term use of the SPR inner loop on the outcomes of that process.

Attachments

Draft Amendment to Supplemental Use Guidelines at Green Lake Park (next page)



SDOT map of recently completed improvements around Green Lake



TO: Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk
FROM: Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
DATE: [MONTH] [DAY], 2021
Topic: Amendment of Supplemental Use Guidelines at Green Lake Park

WHEREAS, as the City of Seattle continues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the rise of new variants, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) remains focused on ensuring safe access to outdoor space; and

WHEREAS, limiting the uses of the Green Lake inner loop path to pedestrians only creates more space for path users and the ability to social distance given the high use on the trail; and

WHEREAS the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is working to study the feasibility of a full outer Green Lake biking and walking loop, building off the recently completed [Green Lake and Wallingford Multimodal Paving Project](#); and

WHEREAS the completion of this project would significantly reduce the crowding on the inner loop due to competing uses including bicycles and other wheeled uses; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the procedure set forth in SMC 3.02.030 section C, the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners held a public hearing on October 28, 2021 affording all interested persons an opportunity to present data, views, or arguments in regard to this proposed action; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the procedure set forth in SMC 3.02.030 section A, notice for that public hearing was posted in the Daily Journal of Commerce and on Seattle Parks and Recreation’s website on September 28, 2021, exceeding the requirement of posting notice 10 days prior to the public hearing and 14 days prior to this action; NOW, THEREFORE,

Pursuant to the authority under SMC 18.12.040 sections B and G, I, Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, do hereby amend SPR Policy 060-P 7.13.1.1 – Supplemental Use Guidelines for Green Lake Park ([Clerk File 321447](#)) Green Lake Courtesy Code (Appendix 8.1, referenced in Section 4.3.5) to restrict all bicycles and other wheeled uses from the Green Lake Park inner loop. This restriction does not apply to a person with a disability who uses wheeled equipment or the use of strollers.

This use change will remain in effect until such time as the Superintendent deems it appropriate to take further action.

Signature

Date