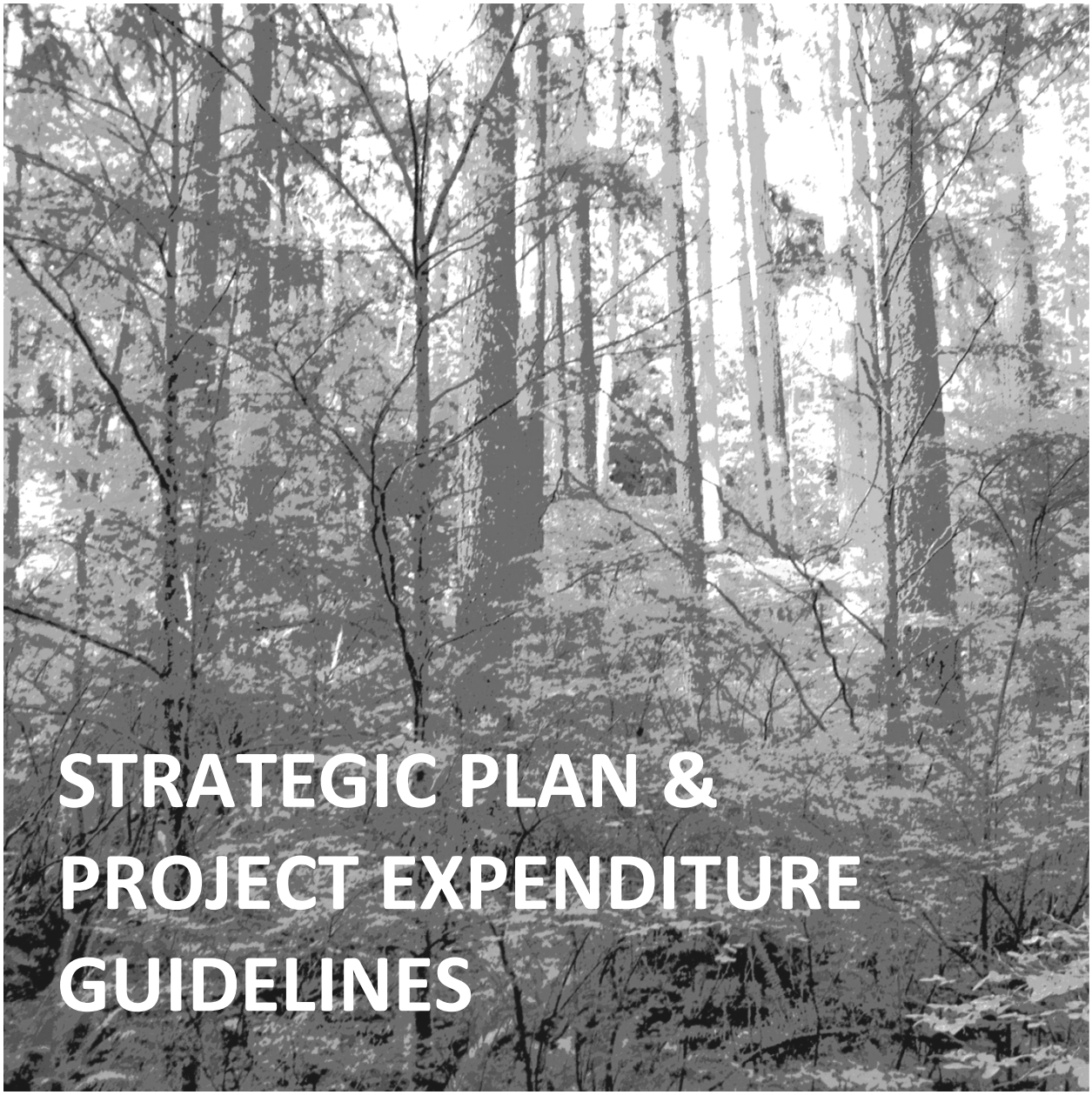

2017-2018 Greenway Program

Prepared by

City of Bellingham Parks & Recreation Department and Greenway Advisory Committee for the Bellingham City Council

City of Bellingham, Washington

Council
April Barker
Terry Bornemann
Daniel Hammill
Gene Knutson
Michael Lilliquist
Roxanne Murphy
Pinky Vargas

Greenway Advisory Committee
Ted Rosen
Emily Derenne
Jono Manion
Megan Lee
Roger Collier
Tom Slocum
Jasmine Fast
Janette Kaiser
Skylar Hinkley
Anna Blick
Paul Stephenson

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Simone Sangster
Peter Hurd
Alexis Blue
Katie Stephens
Michael Chiavario
Maggi Kriger
Janice Carmichael
Bill Hasenjaeger
Courtney Lange
Stacy May
Edmund Sullivan

www.cob.org/greenways

INTRODUCTION

PLAN STATUS & REVISION

This document is a two-year set of recommendations to guide Greenway IV levy spending prior to the next biennial budget. This document builds on the October 2011 Strategic Plan for Greenway Program land acquisition. This abridged plan includes new recommendations developed by the GAC and Parks Department staff.

GREENWAY PROGRAM HISTORY

In 2016 voters approved Bellingham's fourth Greenway property tax levy, following similar ballot measures passed in 1990, 1997 and 2009. All four levy ballot measures emphasized acquiring land in linear corridors when possible to enhance and extend existing trail corridors, parks, and conservation sites, as well as park and trail development and in the last three levies, maintenance. Balanced use of greenway lands was envisioned from the start; in addition to emphasizing preservation and linkage of urban natural areas, property has been acquired for a variety of active and passive uses.

Strategic decisions involving property acquisition are made in reference to policy objectives, spatial frameworks, and resource allocations expressed in documents such as the **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan**, the **North Bellingham Trail Plan** and the annual City Budget.

Because Greenway funds are limited they are often combined with other resources to achieve greater public benefit. Other resources include funds from public agency grants, real estate excise taxes, park impact fees, donations and land dedications by private parties and other public agencies.

Table 1 summarizes the GAC's priority projects for development and allocation for 2017-2018. Table 2 summaries the total estimated amount of revenue generated by the levy over this two-year period. Capital maintenance funding for the two-year period, which included funding for additional maintenance staff, was allocated in June, 2017 (Ordinance No. 2017-06-017). Mid-year budget adjustments are pending City Council consideration for allocations of development funds to pursue Cordata Community Park and Squalicum Pier, two of the GAC priority projects listed in Table 1. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop partnerships that support community gardens within the City limits.

ACQUISITION & APPROVAL PROCESS

City Policy PAR 04.01.01, **"Greenway Land Acquisition Procedure"** provides guidelines for acquisition of property utilizing the Greenway Levy Funds. All City land acquisitions are approved by the Bellingham City Council. Recommendations to Council for land acquisitions are first considered in detail by the GAC, taking into account principles noted in its **Acquisition Guidelines**. The GAC's recommendations are then considered by the PRAB, which makes its own recommendation to Council regarding the potential acquisition action.

ACQUISITION STRATEGY

The Greenway Program's approach to property acquisition is guided by published policy documents (including this plan) and through ongoing executive discussions examining the objectives, costs and benefits of each potential property purchase. Council provides direction to staff in executive session and votes in a public session to approve each property acquisition. The following principles and procedures guide and inform the Greenway Program's acquisition strategy:

- *As resources permit, priority projects are pursued strategically to address unique area needs and opportunities and ensure fairness and responsiveness to voters and the public.*

- *The Program relies on securing property rights from willing sellers to assemble sites and corridors. As a consequence it must respond to critical linkage opportunities and be flexible in addressing the needs of sellers and partners.*

- *The Program appraises property at its "fair market value" based on a feasible, "highest and best" land use in terms of the current local economy. The Program must establish a fair purchase price according to how a property can be developed.*

- *The Program maintains an arms-length relationship with the City's regulatory authorities; provision of complementary greenway system elements by others are often required as part of the development process.*

- *The Program strategically evaluates land use opportunities, utility and transportation services and regulated critical areas in deciding to acquire property rights.*

- *The Program seeks grants and donations of cash, land and construction services.*

- *The Program often competes with other prospective buyers and therefore seeks timely decisions from its advisory groups and the City Council in executive and public meetings.*

Table 1. 2017-2018 Greenways Advisory Committee Priorities
(Note: no priority order to this list of projects)

	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
1.	Squalicum Creek/BNSF	Acquire abandoned corridor
2.	Whatcom Creek Trail Completion - General	Acquire and develop remaining properties adjacent to creek
3.	Cordata Community Park - WCC Connections	Connect community park at Cordata to Whatcom Community College with trail
4.	James/Bakerview/King Mtn Park	Acquire land for park and trail
5.	Cordata Community Park Development	Develop phase one of park
6.	Little Squalicum: Pier feasibility study and design	Conduct additional feasibility and preliminary design
7.	RR Ave to Cornwall Beach Corridor	Feasibility for trail connection from Depot Market Square to Cornwall Beach Park
8.	New Happy Valley Park	Investigate possible properties for a neighborhood park in Happy Valley
9.	South Samish Hill Habitat/Trails	Complete Samish Hill trail corridor and connections
10.	"Royal Valley" at King/Queen Mtn	Complete acquisitions for connection to King Mountain
11.	Morries Trail Connection (Northwest and Birchwood)	Construct trail/stairs in easement
12.	Roosevelt Park to Whatcom Creek Trail via Undine	Investigate options and feasibility for a signed route
13.	Racine Street to Squalicum Creek	Trail connection from Barkley Trail to Squalicum Creek Trail in Racine Street Right of Way
14.	Connecting Illinois to RR Trail via Memorial Park	Construct connection through the park

Table 2. 2017-2018 Greenways IV Estimated Revenue

Description	***Total***
Land Acquisitions	3,272,940
Development Projects Mid-year budget allocations pending City Council approval: • $3,000,000 for Cordata Community Park • $500,000 for Squalicum Pier	4,120,560
Capital Maintenance (already allocated)	2,479,500
Totals	9,918,000