

STRATEGIC PLAN
& PROJECT
EXPENDITURE
GUIDELINES

2019-2023 Greenways Program

City of Bellingham, Washington

Prepared by:

City of Bellingham Parks & Recreation Department and Greenways
Advisory Committee (GAC), for the Bellingham City Council

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PLAN STATUS & REVISION

This document is a five-year plan to guide and direct the expenditure of Greenway IV levy funds, including primary and ongoing & contingent priorities. This document builds on the 2017-2018 Strategic Plan and the October 2011 plan for land acquisition.

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. The last three levies also specifically provided for maintenance:

"...proceeds from the additional tax levied... shall be applied to acquire, improve, develop and maintain greenways, open space sites, parks, park facilities, and trails..."
(City of Bellingham, Resolution No. 2016-16, 2016).

The balanced use of greenway properties and easements was envisioned from the start; in addition to habitat preservation and linking access between urban and natural areas, property has been acquired for a variety of uses. Resolution 2016-16 states that Greenway funds should be approximately allocated as follows:

- 42% for the development of properties purchased by the City;
- 33% for land acquisition, specifically including trail connections; and
- 25% for the ongoing maintenance, operation and capital replacement needs of park properties and facilities.

Strategic decisions about Greenway acquisitions are guided by 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 [City Budget](#). The current City Budget has been approved for the 2019-2020 biennium.

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

Table 1 summarizes the GAC's primary priorities for acquisition and development for the remainder of the levy. Table 2 summarizes the GAC's ongoing and contingent priorities, which fall into one or more of the following categories: currently in-process; included in the approved 2019/20 budget; on-hold; or contingent upon the completion of other projects. Table 3 summarizes the total spent by Greenways over 2017 and 2018, and Table 4 summarizes the approved 2019/2020 approved City budget. Annual tax revenue to fund the program is approximately \$5 million, and the estimated ending Greenways Fund reserve balance after 2019/2020 is \$6.7 million.

ACQUISITION & APPROVAL PROCESS

City Policy PAR 04.01.01, [“Greenway Land Acquisition Procedure”](#) provides guidelines for the acquisition of property utilizing the Greenway Levy Funds. All City land acquisitions are ultimately approved by the Bellingham City Council. Recommendations to Council for land acquisitions are first considered in detail by the GAC, taking into account the 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 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. 2019-2023 Primary Priorities

(Note: This list is not ranked by priority.)

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
Improve trails and habitat connectivity throughout Bellingham	GAC to update the <i>North Bellingham Trail Plan</i> and the <i>Proposed Trails</i> in the Comprehensive Plan (<i>PRO Plan</i>) update.
Connect Cordata Park, Whatcom Community College and Van Wyck Park	Acquire and develop trail connections between Cordata Park, Whatcom Community College and Van Wyck Park.
Connect Riley Open Space and the Cordata Trail	Complete the connection between Northwest Ave. and Aldrich Road. Acquire and develop trail connections between Meadowbrook Court and Cordata Trail.
Acquire a Neighborhood Park in Happy Valley	Acquire land for a neighborhood park in Happy Valley.
Develop King and Queen Mountain Greenway	Develop King & Queen Mountain Greenway while protecting habitat.
Expand use of Galbraith Mountain trails and improve wayfinding	Encourage non-motorized use of trails and improve wayfinding throughout Galbraith Mountain Open Space.
Acquire Northridge Park connectors	Acquire and develop a trail corridor to extend the Northridge Park Trail west, to the Sussex-to-Bristol Connector Trail, and connecting the Railroad trail north to Sussex Drive.
Acquire Padden Gorge Ridge Trail	Acquire land or access to complete a trail corridor along the ridgeline of Padden Gorge.
Foster and support the development of Community Gardens	Seek opportunities to acquire new community gardens, expand existing community gardens, or partner with other entities to support community gardens.

Table 2. 2019-2023 Ongoing and Contingent Priorities

These include priorities that are either:

- currently in-process; or
- included in the approved 2019/20 budget; or
- on-hold; or
- contingent upon the completion of other projects.

(Note: This list is not ranked by priority.)

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
Acquire trail corridor along Squalicum Creek	Acquire former rail corridor.
Acquire a Neighborhood Park in the Bakerview Corridor	Acquire land for a neighborhood park and trail along the E. Bakerview corridor.
Ensure public access to Little Squalicum Pier	Acquire public access to Little Squalicum Pier, pending results of current studies.
Connect Railroad Ave. to Cornwall Beach	Assess the feasibility of a trail connection from Depot Market Square to Cornwall Beach Park.
Complete Whatcom Creek Trail	As opportunities arise, acquire land or access to create a continuous greenway trail and habitat corridor along Whatcom Creek.
Protect habitat and enhance the connection between South Samish Crest Open Space and Padden Open Space	Acquire or trade property for habitat protection or to enhance trail connectivity between Lake Padden Open Space and South Samish Crest Open Space.
Develop “Morrie’s Trail” connection along Squalicum Way	Construct access from Northwest Ave. to Squalicum Way, if property is acquired along Squalicum Way.
Connect Barkley Trail to Squalicum Creek Trail and improve wayfinding	Acquire land or access to complete a trail corridor along the Racine St. ROW from the Barkley Trail to Squalicum Creek Trail, and improve wayfinding.
Develop Cordata Park	Complete Phases One and Two of Cordata Community Park.

Table 3. 2017-2018 Greenways Spending Summary

Greenways Spending Summary 2017-2018				
		2017	2018	TOTALS
EXPENSES	TYPE			
Bandel	Land/easement	28,090		
Monahan	Land/easement	69,795		
Stull/Royal Valley	Land/easement		165,539	
Galbraith Mountain	Land/easement		2,752,177	
Elite (Bear Creek corridor mitigation parcels)	Land/easement		1,281,769	
Hoag parcel	Land/easement		6,926	
TOTAL LAND ACQUISITION		97,885	4,206,411	4,304,296
Whatcom Falls Woburn Trailhead	Development	162,993	202,212	
Squalicum Creek Park - Stormwater	Development	11,847		
Lake Padden improvements (GW3)	Development	7,942	215,395	
Cordata Park	Development	82,137	525,733	
Squalicum Pier - feasibility	Development		15,656	
Riley Site trails	Development		59,458	
Bay to Baker Trail	Development	46,772		
Cornwall Park Trail	Development	375,011		
Waypoint Park/Central Pier	Development	116,794	2,024,500	
MHP Misc Improvements	Development		20,524	
Squalicum Creek Trail	Development		151,614	
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT		803,496	3,215,092	4,018,588
Civic Grandstand Reroof	Maintenance		266,493	
Civic Track Resurface	Maintenance		189,344	
Lake Padden Bathhouse	Maintenance		120,473	
Maintenance staff and materials (includes Boulevard Park interim cleanup, structure assessments, Natural Resource staff and repair projects, Parks Project Manager	Maintenance	744,400	859,184	
TOTAL MAINTENANCE		744,400	1,435,494	2,179,894
TOTAL				10,502,778

Table 4. 2019/2020 Greenways Budget

APPROVED BUDGET		2019	2020	TOTALS
Greenway Land Acquisition	Land/easement	1,000,000	2,000,000	
TOTAL LAND ACQUISITION		1,000,000	2,000,000	3,000,000
Cordata Park	Development	2,500,000		
Lake Padden Park (sewer)	Development	428,400		
Interurban Trail - Fairhaven Park, Woodstock, Arroyo	Development	300,000	300,000	
Squalicum Creek Park Ph 4 YAF field	Development		500,000	
Squalicum Pier	Development	250,000		
TOTAL DEVELOPMENT		3,478,400	800,000	4,278,400
Trails, Repairs and Maintenance	Maintenance	30,000	30,000	
Wetland Monitoring and maintenance	Maintenance	20,000	20,000	
Wharf Street Trestle repair	Maintenance	500,000		
Maintenance staff and materials (includes Natural Resources and new Cordata Park staff)	Maintenance	701,510	857,101	
Boulevard Park Overpass - Utility Re-route	Maintenance	1,500,000		
Geri Field #2 lighting & steel poles (Civic)	Maintenance	246,000		
TOTAL MAINTENANCE		2,997,510	907,101	3,904,611
TOTAL				11,183,011