



Artist's conception of how the new 63.5-acre McCormick Village park could be developed.

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## Public shares vision for McCormick Village

By [JEFF RHODES](#)

Port Orchard Independent Editor

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Not yet burdened with the limitations of reality, attendees at Monday night's Port Orchard Planning Commission meeting were free to revel in the boundless possibilities afforded by McCormick Village.

“This is a momentous occasion,” said commission chair Bek Ashby of the 63.5-acre park the city will have the opportunity to plan from the ground up in newly annexed McCormick Woods. “This is the first new park the city has added in a very long time, and we’re all very excited about it.”

Ashby, who said she was born and raised on Anderson Hill Road near the park site, is one of three Planning Commission members who volunteered to serve on the committee that will guide its development.

“I have a definite affinity for that area,” she said, “And I’m looking forward to being a part of this process.”

As part of the development of McCormick Woods, the community’s prime developer, GEM 1, agreed to pay park fees for a large parcel designated as McCormick Village.

In 2007, the company made a lump sum payment of \$643,732 to Kitsap County to be used for park development.

Of this amount, \$50,000 was designated for design work.

Following McCormick Woods’ annexation last year by Port Orchard, the responsibility for developing the park falls to the city.

“There are a number of small, private parks already in McCormick Woods,” said Associate City Planner Tom Bonsell, who has been designated as the project manager for the park planning effort. “But the city isn’t involved with those.

“This project is different,” he said. “McCormick Village will be a regional park and the city will be responsible for planning, developing and maintaining it.”

Monday night marked the first official step in that process, as the Planning Commission heard comments from members of the public about what they wanted to see on the site.

McCormick Woods resident Will Smith, for example, said he was a tennis enthusiast and hoped the new park would include courts.

Dick Davis, who helped spearhead last year’s annexation drive, said the same group of McCormick Woods residents who worked on that effort was actively involved in the park concept and already had a few ideas on what it could include.

“One of the things we could pursue is making it an interpretive site,” he said. “It’s a very interesting property ecologically.”

Davis also suggested developing a fitness trail, and possibly working with South Kitsap High School’s agricultural department to make the park an educational facility, as was done with the Howe Farm site several years ago.

“The possibilities are endless,” he said. “The important thing is to do it well.”

“Whatever we build,” said Port Orchard resident Fred Rogers, “we need to make sure it’s world-class. It needs to be something people will actually use. If we do this right, we can create something that can generate revenue that can be reinvested.”

Park maintenance and upkeep was a major point of discussion on Monday night, and several attendees wondered whether any of the \$600,000 in seed money would be set aside for that purpose.

“We will be using \$50,000 to hire a design consultant,” said Port Orchard Planning Director James Weaver, “and of the things we hope to see from them is some way for the facilities we develop to generate the revenue we need to maintain the park.”

Port Orchard Mayor Lary Coppola noted that the money set aside by Gem 1 was just the beginning.

“One of the things I had to learn on this job is how grant money works,” he said. “I used to think you applied for a grant and someone just gave you the money. But it turns out grants often come with the requirement that you match the amount you’re given.

“In this case,” Coppola said, “instead of spending the entire \$600,000 on the park, we think we can use it to match grant money and parlay it into an even larger amount.”

The city is currently recruiting volunteers to serve on the park planning committee, which must make its recommendations to a yet-to-be hired design consultant by August.

The consultant, in turn, will develop a plan the Port Orchard City Council will consider by the end of the year.

McCormick Village Park public survey is available on the city's Web site for soliciting public input and comments related to the park plan at [www.cityofportorchard.us/mccormick-woods-annexation](http://www.cityofportorchard.us/mccormick-woods-annexation).

Additional comments and suggestions can be sent to City of Port Orchard, 216 Prospect Street, Port Orchard, WA 98366, or e-mailed to [planning@cityofportorchard.us](mailto:planning@cityofportorchard.us).

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