

# PORT ORCHARD INDEPENDENT

## Planning Commission approves design for McCormick Village Park

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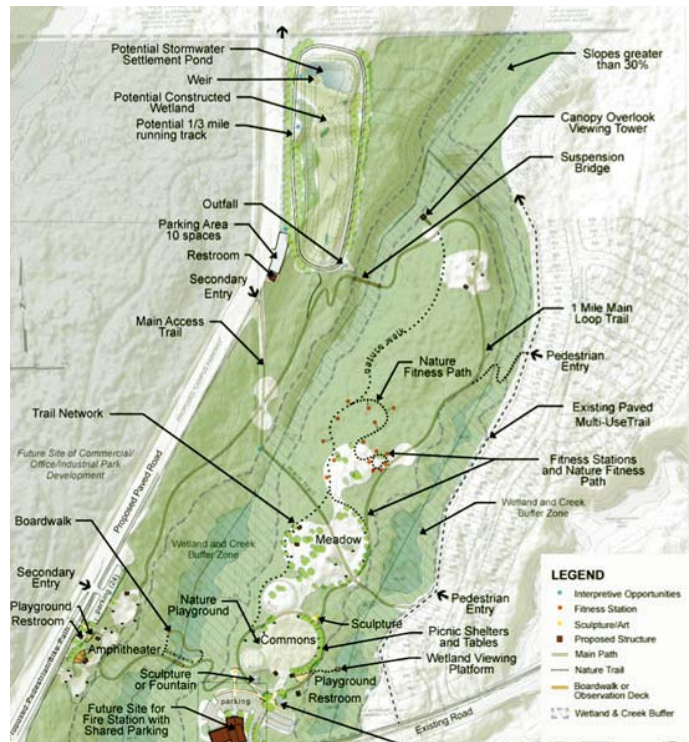
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The Port Orchard Planning Commission on Monday night agreed on a design plan for the city's first new park in 20 years.

The matter will now be sent to the city council for approval and, more importantly, to consider funding options.

"We're hoping the council will consider the plan some time in December," said associate city planner Tom Bonsell. "We don't have a firm time line in place, but we'd like to get something started by next fall."

Best-case scenario, the total build-out time for the project would be two to three years, he said. The project, dubbed the McCormick Village Park, would be located on a slight ridge between two stream branches adjacent to Old Clifton Road and north of the McCormick Woods golf course development.



Park planners preferred options that would leave the site in a mostly natural state, but added a few people-friendly features. Courtesy graphic

The proposed site features a mixture of wetlands, second-growth forest and shady clearings. In all, the property is 27.4 acres with an additional 13 acres potentially available to the west. While the parcels add up to 40 acres, only 22 acres can realistically accommodate most recreation uses.

The site was designated as park land in the broader McCormick Village development plan. Previously owned by Kitsap County, the site became city property when the area was annexed by Port Orchard in July 2009. A park planning committee, consisting of city officials and volunteer members, began discussions in May, prioritizing different visions for the project.

The version approved on Monday by the Planning Commission most closely resembled what the group called its Nature and Community Alternative, which stressed keeping as much of the land in its natural state as possible. However, the plan was modified to incorporate the best elements from the other alternatives in order to provide recreation and community-use features, as well.

"There was general agreement on the least-intrusive plan we could come up with," Bonsell said. "But that plan would have made the park available to so few people that we had to make a few concessions."

For example, an amphitheater and picnic area were added to the west side of the park to provide an outlet for music and outdoor theater. Fitness stations were worked into near an area off the main loop trail. Sculpture was planned for several key areas to provide a visual focal point to the park and link the park more closely with the adjacent fire station. All development, however, with the exception of trails and boardwalks, will be kept out of the wetland buffer.

Stormwater will be controlled and treated before being released to the environment and the significant trees and thick portions of the forest will all be preserved to provide a learning environment and wildlife habitat. In addition, there will be a network of interpretive signs and experiences to provide an immersion in the understanding of a forest. A one-mile loop trail, nature trails, meadows and fitness stations will all provide a place for people to exercise out of doors and interact with the forest environment, planners say.

There will be two main gathering areas for the community — the Commons, a large green open space with a ring of trees and shelters surrounding it, and the amphitheater for more formal events and community activities. To ensure the park can be used by virtually everyone, all trails, boardwalks and plazas will be sloped less than 5 percent, stairs will have required handrails and structures will cater to those in wheelchairs. Where stairs and structures preclude wheelchair access, a similar alternative route or experience is provided.

The McCormick Village Park entry and plaza has the following features:

- monumental entry sign;
- shared parking with the proposed Kitsap Fire Station;
- an entry walkway and bike trail will connect the regional paths along Old Clifton Road with the park's trail network;
- an entry plaza with a relaxed feel featuring seating and plantings — the visitor will be able to have
- a clear view along the formal entry axis to the park commons and the sculpture beyond;
- restrooms will sized for three facilities in each side;
- a small play area for smaller children will be located on the edge of the Commons; and,
- a fountain or artistic installation will be the source of a small, linear water feature that refers to the small forest streams of the Kitsap Peninsula and their dynamic nature. The moving water will mask traffic noise from the parking lot and Old Clifton Road.

All told, the park is projected to cost in excess of \$2 million to complete, and planners envision generating the funds from a variety of sources, including bonds and tax revenues, federal and state grants, partnerships, in-kind contributions and private donations.

“When the city inherited this site,” Bonsall said, “it came with a sizable chunk of money, about \$650,000, from the McCormick Land Co. “Our plan was to use \$50,000 of that money to fund a design study,” he said. “The rest will be used as seed money to fund our share of grant matches. Used that way, we can turn \$600,000 into a substantial amount.” Bonsall said the park was envisioned as a place of “quiet contemplation” and plans did not call for anything that would generate revenue to be used for upkeep.

“Then again, we don’t anticipate huge maintenance costs anyway,” he said. “Other than cutting the grass occasionally, I’m not sure we’ll have a lot of other expenses.”

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