

MacLeod Reckord PLLC

Landscape Architecture ■ Planning ■ Urban Design
110 Prefontaine Place South, Suite 600
Seattle, Washington 98104
P 206-323-7919

Mountlake Terrace RPOS – Veterans Memorial Park Master Plan Program Assessment

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The following program assessment for Veterans Memorial Park in the City of Mountlake Terrace is based upon information collected from the following surveys and discussions:

- Veterans Memorial Park Master Plan Stakeholders Meeting, November 17, 2020
- Veterans Memorial Park Master Plan Online Survey Summary Results, December 21, 2020
- Mountlake Terrace Recreation, Parks & Open Space Plan Community Survey Summary Results, January 6, 2021

More detailed information on key findings, percentage preferences, opinions, and general comments can be found in these referenced documents.

Site Analysis exhibits supported the surveys and discussions and included these graphics, developed October 2020:

- Veterans Memorial Park – Existing Conditions (3 Exhibits)
- Veterans Memorial Park – Images
- Veterans Memorial Park – Analysis

Current Park Use Summary

Survey respondents generally indicated they place great value on the park trails, particularly the Main Trail that connects 58th Avenue W with the Transit Center. In addition, they value the natural and wild character of the forest and feel preservation of this wooded area is important to the character of the growing community. The other park amenities that received comment, but were generally less notable, included the play area, gazebo, open lawn areas, and Veterans Memorial. Many respondents noted the state of disrepair and/or lack of maintenance of trails, woodland upkeep, play equipment, gazebo, and picnic areas. The lack of lighting for the Main Trail was cited as a reason some felt intimidated or unsafe using trails early and late in the day. A major issue concerning the community is the vagrant/homeless use of the park and that the denseness of the vegetation inhibits visibility through the park, increasing the sense of lack of safety.

The reasons cited for visiting Veterans Memorial Park include:

- Trail use / Walking / Running / Dog Walking / Geocaching
- Accessing Transit Center or other perimeter destinations
- Enjoying nature in the City / Bird watching
- Play area use / Picnic or unscheduled open space use
- Stewardship / Picking up trash

Park Program Elements

Based on results from both surveys the highest priority potential improvements to the Park include:

- Trail improvements with trail lighting
- Restoration of natural areas / tree plantings
- Restroom installation
- Gathering place / picnic areas
- Upgraded play equipment
- Veteran Memorial or tribute improvements

Other improvements, or more details about the highest priority improvements, include:

- Nature play areas / more creative play opportunities / story walks in partnership with the Library / integrate the spider into a new improved play area
- Expand upper loop trail
- Improve other trails with new surfacing and/or grading to achieve ADA compliance.

Specific trails mentioned:

- Connecting 60th Ave and the Civic Campus
- Connecting 60th Ave with the Transit Center along the west side of the Park
- Connecting the Civic Campus with the Transit Center
- Within the right-of-way along the south side of the park
- Add wayfinding signs and/or improve online information about trail condition and routing
- Add benches along the main trail
- Provide a covered space for gatherings and outdoor education
- Add more gathering areas and picnic tables / locations
- Improve or expand on the Veteran's Memorial
- Improve visibility into the forest / add lighting
- Remove or update gazebo
- Add bike racks
- Add exercise stations
- Add a disc golf course
- Add a drinking fountain
- Add a skate park
- Add basketball hoops
- Add a pickleball court
- Provide regular maintenance
- Manage transients / removing hiding and camping places
- General clean up including adding trash cans and pet waste stations

Program Assessment to Inform Park Options

Assessing the suitability of such a broad range of program elements / park improvements requires a strategic assessment of not only site conditions but carrying capacity of the Park. Due to the size, topography, and density of mature vegetation throughout the park, the type and number of program improvements may be limited. The benefit in generating conceptual options for the Park master plan is to illustrate and describe:

1. What the range of program elements means for the impact to, or compatibility with, the most valued aspects of the Park;
2. What can reasonably fit the site, and;
3. Whether the combination of program elements meets the needs of the public and the City.

Three conceptual options are presented in graphic and table form. Options vary generally from minimal development (Option 1) to moderate development (Option 2) to maximum development scenarios (Option 3). The program for each option is indicated in the tables that follow. The following actions are recommended for all options:

- Develop / update the Vegetation Management and Forest Habitat Enhancement Plan and identify timeline, specific tasks and responsible parties.
- Proactive action from the City to identify a “Friends of Veterans Memorial Park” or similar interest group responsible for coordinating work parties to maintain trails and facilities, perform light vegetation maintenance (possibly with support of City crews for larger jobs or for pick-up of pruning debris), plant according to the Vegetation Management Plan, and regularly patrol and report on illegal behavior.
- Increase and dedicate City maintenance budget for miscellaneous repair and regular clean up.

Improvement of the Main Trail that connects 58th Ave W with the Transit Center is a program element that currently has funding and is the highest priority for Park improvement. Specific trail improvements identified in the grant are to reconstruct the trail to be ADA compliant, which means reducing steep slopes and providing paving, and to illuminate the route. ADA compliance for a pedestrian trail can be met in a number of ways including building steeper ramps (8.3% maximum) with handrails on both sides or flattening the trail to a lesser slope (4.9% maximum) which does not require handrails, or a combination of the two. For purposes of comparison, each of the three Options presents a different way to achieve ADA compliance in the Main Trail which results in a very different aesthetic and results in less or more impact to the surrounding topography and tree cover.

OPTION 1

Program Element	Specific Improvements
Trail Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjust grades on Main Trail for ADA compliance with ramp/landing (8.3% max grade) and handrails both sides. Horizontal alignment is close to existing.• Pave Main Trail and resurface Upper Loop Trail with asphalt.• Resurface northernmost trail connecting 60th Ave and the Civic Center with additional gravel.• All other trails to remain to be regraded and left with native soil surfacing.• Replace footbridge with wider, longer structure that is slightly elevated to improve trail grades above and clearance below.
Frontage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance frontage to meet City standard along Park with widened sidewalk and plantings.
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add lighting along Main Trail.
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add wayfinding signs depicting trail system at all five entrances.
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove gazebo.
Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supplement engineered wood fiber surfacing in play area.• Retain existing footprint and edging.
Vegetation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vegetation Management to include removal of all ivy, blackberry and other invasive species.• Pocket plant disturbed areas with native shrubs and groundcover.

OPTION 2

Program Element	Specific Improvements
Trail Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust grades on Main Trail for ADA compliance with combination of ramp/landing (8.3% max grade) and handrails both sides AND flattened slope (4.9% max grade) and no handrails. Alignment extends north into Middle Plateau and eliminates some trees. • Pave Main Trail and resurface Upper Loop Trail with asphalt. • Resurface northernmost trail connecting 60th Ave and the Civic Center with additional gravel. • Secondary trails, such as the trail connection between northernmost trail to Main Trail and the trail connection between Main Trail and Upper Loop Trail to be regraded and surfaced in gravel. • All other trails to remain to be regraded and left with native soil surfacing. • Replace footbridge with wider, longer structure that is slightly elevated to improve trail grades above and clearance below.
Frontage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance frontage to meet City standard along Park and as necessary at Library with widened sidewalk and plantings.
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add lighting along Main Trail and Upper Loop Trail. Enhance/upgrade Veteran's Memorial flag and plaque at base. Add lighting to gazebo and restroom.
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add wayfinding signs depicting trail system at all five entrances. • Add interpretive sign at stormwater pond / drainage channel.
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore gazebo. • Add a single stall restroom near the play area.
Gathering Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore Upper Lawn for gatherings
Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess play equipment for suitability and retain those in an acceptable condition. Retain Spider and refurbish to current safety standards. • Replace all unsuitable equipment with new equipment. • Retain existing footprint and edging. • Supplement engineered wood fiber surfacing in play area.
Vegetation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation Management to include removal of all ivy, blackberry and other invasive species. • Pocket plant disturbed areas with native shrubs and groundcover. • Minor tree thinning to reduce canopy competition or other high priority actions recommended in Vegetation Management Plan.

OPTION 3

Program Element	Specific Improvement
Trail Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust grades on Main Trail for ADA compliance with flattened slope (4.9% max grade) and no handrails. Alignment extends north of Middle Plateau, connects to Civic Campus, and eliminates more trees. • Pave Main Trail and trail connection between northernmost trail to Main Trail and resurface Upper Loop Trail with asphalt. • Resurface northernmost trail connecting 60th Ave and the Civic Center with additional gravel. • All other trails to remain to be surfaced with gravel. • Add new gravel surfaced trail connections along south and west edges of park with stairs at steep slopes as necessary to create a larger loop trail system around the park. • Replace footbridge with wider, longer structure that is slightly elevated to improve trail grades above and clearance below.
Frontage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance frontage to meet City standard along Park and north to the Civic Campus plaza with widened sidewalk and plantings.
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add lighting along Main Trail, Upper Loop Trail and North Connector Trail. Enhance/upgrade Veteran's Memorial flag and plaque at base. Add lighting to new picnic shelter and restroom.
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add wayfinding signs depicting trail system at all five entrances. • Add interpretive signs at stormwater pond / drainage channel. Incorporate other enhancements to the Veteran's Memorial as recommended by community / committee.
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a dual stall restroom near the play area. • Replace gazebo with new picnic shelter that is of a complementary style to new restroom building. New shelter may be in a different location than the gazebo.
Gathering Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore Upper Lawn for gatherings • Develop Middle Plateau for gatherings
Play Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace play area with and an expanded nature-based themed play area that includes equipment for ages 2-5 and 5-12, new edging, surfacing and accessible ramps.
Vegetation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation Management to include removal of all ivy, blackberry and other invasive species. • Pocket plant disturbed areas with native shrubs and groundcover. • More comprehensive tree thinning to reduce canopy competition or other high priority actions recommended in Vegetation Management Plan.