



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 7, 2012
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Mark Mead, Senior Forester
Subject: Green Seattle Partnership Update

Requested Board Action

No formal vote is requested. This is an update to the Park Board following a briefing in April 2011 on the Green Seattle Partnership's (GSP) Five-Year Strategic Plan and budgeting.

Project or Policy Description and Background

In 2004 the City of Seattle embarked on the innovative 20-year GSP effort to restore 2,500 acres of urban forested parkland, a restoration effort that has become one of the largest and most successful programs of its kind in the country. This effort would not be possible without inspiring levels of volunteerism, a dedication to appropriate ecosystem science and high levels of executive and managerial support across the City and within our community. This project involves tireless investment of citizens, community leaders, agencies, non-profits, companies and the City. Forterra (formerly Cascade Land Conservancy) is the program's major partner and has replicated the Green Seattle Partnership model in four other cities in the region.

Since the program's inception, over 732 acres have been brought into active restoration through: City investment of \$9 million from a combination of funds from the City's Cumulative Reserve Fund (CRF), the Pro Parks Levy and the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy; community investment of over 500,000 hours of volunteer support; and \$4 million in community donations and grants.

The Partnership's Executive Council reviewed potential options in the face of current and projected funding reductions and opted for the development of strategies that will reach the original goals of the 20-Year Strategic Plan over a slightly longer timeframe. The Executive Council is in the process of developing an updated supplement to the 20-Year Strategic Plan outlining a strategy for the next five years with revised high level benchmarks, goals and outcomes. An annual plan will be created each year with more detailed tasks and deliverables.

Forterra has reached its original goal to raise \$3 million for the Partnership by 2011, and will now enter into a contractual phase with the City, with Parks and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) paying Forterra for GSP work. The Partnership will seek additional members and projects changes in its current governance over the next five years. Funding challenges are being addressed currently through the development of funding resources outside of Parks.

Budget

The GSP is at a critical juncture in funding. Funds from the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy has buoyed the GSP budget, as CRF funding for the program has declined due to the difficult economy. (CRF funds accrue from the Real Estate Excise Tax, a tax on new development and real estate transactions.)

The GSP 5-Year Strategy includes goals and deliverables in three categories; **Community, Field and Resources**. The following chart shows the goals for the next five years and a comparison with current planned funding from Parks.

5-Year Strategy Goals

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Community					
Forest Stewards	120	130	140	150	150
Volunteer hours	80,000	90,000	95,000	100,000	100,000
Field					
Acres to maintain	737	812	912	1037	1187
New Acres per year	75	100	125	150	150
Resources					
CRF & Levy Funding	\$2,500,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
O&M Funding (Natural Area Crew)	\$525,803	\$599,139	\$741,191	\$883,243	\$1,025,295

Actual Planned Resources

CRF & Levy Funding (with Inflation spending)	\$1,220,000	\$1,283,000	\$1,403,000	\$1,194,000	?
O&M Funding (assume consistent funding)	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000

Difference

CRF & Levy Funding	(\$1,280,000)	(\$1,717,000)	(\$1,597,000)	(\$1,806,000)	
O&M Funding	(\$175,803)	(\$249,139)	(\$391,191)	(\$533,243)	(\$675,295)

Because of the reduction in CRF funding, the 2012 CRF/Levy portion of the budget is \$1,220,000 a \$500,000 decline from the 2011 level. In addition, Forterra will not be able to sustain their funding and are at the end of their commitment for direct contributions to the GSP activities. To support Forterra's work for the GSP, in 2012

Parks and SPU will contract services with Forterra for \$145,000, with \$45,000 coming from Parks and \$100,000 from SPU. The impact of reduced funding from both Forterra and the City has led to an overall reduction in the budget of \$952,243 (from \$2,636,400 in 2011 to \$1,570,000 in 2012). Parks has been fortunate in that two grants were received for work directed at specific sites in 2011: \$500,000 for West Duwamish and \$250,000 for Lewis Park to be allocated over three years (2011-2013).

Public Involvement Process

In a sense, the over 700 volunteer events held annually by the GSP are public meetings. Since 2004 the annual Green Seattle Day has been held on the first weekend of November; in 2011 over 800 people attended. It is estimated that over 25,000 citizens participated in at least one GSP event in 2011. There are now 130 active volunteer Forest Stewards that donate Saturdays every month, hundreds of small and large companies that donate staff time and resources, over 20 non-profits that leverage City funding, and over 70 schools that participate annually in the Partnership. While these numbers are impressive, of concern to the Partnership is the 10% reduction in volunteer hours in 2011 as compared to 2010. With volunteerism suffering across the state and country, the Partnership will be seeking methods to increase volunteerism with non-profit partners.

In September of 2011, the GSP held its first Shareholders Meeting to describe the accomplishments of the program and to discuss the funding challenge. Citizens and non-profit partners were asked to provide suggestions on a series of Partnership related issues.

Environmental Sustainability

The intention of the Green Seattle Partnership is to improve the overall environmental and community health of Seattle by modeling a sustainable program that directly improves the urban forest, creates the management infrastructure to support these efforts and creates a community of knowledgeable and engaged stewards. The GSP is creating a successful model of Environmental Sustainability.

Issues

No major issues of public conflict have been encountered during the last five years of the Green Seattle Partnership. Some issues, such as working in and around encampments, slope stability, worker safety, loss of privacy and potential view conflicts have come up and are addressed through applicable City procedures or measures.

Schedule

The Partnership was originally developed as a 20-year plan. Budget reductions have increased the timeline such that current estimates are that restoration of 2,500 acres will take 25 to 30 years.

Additional Information

The Green Seattle Partnership can be found at <http://greenseattle.org/>. For more information, contact Mark Mead: mark.mead@seattle.gov

