

## 6. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

This chapter comprises the Medina Park Plan, which is fully incorporated into this Parks and Open Space Element of the Medina Comprehensive Plan.

### INTRODUCTION

The City's large open spaces are the defining elements of Medina's community character. In the early 1950s, residents of the newly incorporated City of Medina were concerned about the development that was taking place in nearby Bellevue. From 1959 to 1971, Medina acquired and developed Fairweather Nature Preserve, Medina Park, and Medina Beach Park. Other open space areas that were part of the incorporated City included undeveloped platted street ends that abut Lake Washington (present View Point Park and Lake Lane) and undeveloped street rights-of-way (such as the Community Trail System [formerly called the Indian Trail] and NE 26<sup>th</sup> Street). The vision of Medina's early residents created both active and passive parks resulting in the parks and open spaces that are enjoyed today.

### Growth Management Act

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires comprehensive plans to contain “a park and recreation element that implements, and is consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. The element shall include: (a) Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period; (b) an evaluation of facilities and service needs; and (c) an evaluation of tree canopy coverage within the urban growth area; and d) an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand.”

The following planning goal for open space and recreation is provided in the Revised Code of Washington (36.70A.020):

“Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.”

Additionally, King County countywide planning policies (CPPs) direct jurisdictions to identify and protect open spaces within their comprehensive plans.

### Guiding Principle

The Medina Park Board serves as the Medina City Council's primary advisory body on matters pertaining to the use, maintenance, and enhancement of the City's public parks and open spaces. The board is guided by the principle that Medina's parks are natural areas that require ongoing stewardship of the entire community so that they remain protected and nurtured. Without the requisite supervision and maintenance, the vegetation, wildlife, and quality of environment that the Medina parks provide will disappear or be altered to the detriment of the public.

## EXISTING PARKS AND CONDITIONS

Recognized national park metrics show that agencies typically offer 10.8 acres of park space for every 1,000 residents<sup>13</sup>. There are approximately 34 acres of parks or other open spaces in Medina, which equals 12 acres of park space per 1,000 residents. The following is an inventory of the City’s parks.

### Medina Park (Community Park)

**LOCATION:** South of NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street, bounded on the east by 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE and 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE on the west.

**SIZE:** 17.6 acres. The Medina Park includes two undeveloped parcels at its southern extent which may contain regulated wetland and protected habitat features (Figure 4).

#### FEATURES:

- The site contains a wetland and two ponds that provide storm water detention
- Off-leash and On-leash Dog Areas
- Public Works Yard/City Shop facilities

#### PARK FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Public Restrooms	Yes
Tennis/Bocce Ball Court	Yes
Playground Equipment	Yes
Walking Trails	Yes
Benches	Yes
Parking Facilities	Yes
Playfield	Yes
Pier/Dock	No
Swimming Area	No
Other Improvements	Art Sculptures; Community Notice Board; Drinking Fountains; Picnic Shelter; Bicycle Racks

#### HISTORY

Medina Park was created in 1965 when City officials spearheaded the purchase of five properties with matching grant dollars for approximately \$80,000. Today, the combined area offers both active and passive uses: two vehicle parking areas, playfields, playground area with playground equipment, tennis court, bocce ball court, walking paths, restroom facilities, and off- and on-leash dog exercise areas. Passive activities include quiet spaces for sitting, bird watching, lawns for relaxing, viewable art, and tables for picnicking.

The park today is a social epicenter, a gathering place that is expansive enough to host large scale

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<sup>13</sup> National Recreation and Park Association, 2023

events like the annual Medina Days celebration, concerts, unofficial soccer and baseball games, yet also serve individual needs of adults, children, and dogs. The walking paths and open areas make the park a desirable destination for human/canine socialization. In an effort to manage compatible usage of the park by dog owners and other users, a policy was adopted by the Council that divides Medina Park into two defined on-leash and off-leash sections separated by the two ponds. The green lawn area in the western section of the park is watered by an irrigation system, and the eastern non-irrigated section remains the year-round off-leash dedicated area for dogs. The two original low areas of the park were developed into stormwater detention ponds and are rimmed by open grassy spaces, punctuated with trees and shrubs, seasonal plantings, artwork, meandering gravel pathways, and numerous benches for rest, introspection, and bird watching.

Other attributes include planted trees to commemorate an event, an individual’s service, or in memory of loved ones. Medina residents also enjoy the opportunity to dedicate a bench in the park. The northeast corner of the park serves as a landscaped defined entry to the City. The park is an urban bird-watching destination. The site is home to a variety of waterfowl including Canadian geese, mallards, wood ducks, cormorants, and blue heron. To celebrate famed woodcarver Dudley Carter’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, residents purchased one of his wood sculptures, “Wind Song” and hung the piece in the picnic shelter of the park. An additional stone sculpture, “Summer” stands in the southwest corner of the park and was donated by Peter Skinner, a resident of Medina.

**Medina Beach Park (Community Park)**

LOCATION: South point of Evergreen Point Road (Historic site of Leschi Ferry terminal).

SIZE: 1.44 acres.

FEATURES:

- Public Beach
- City Hall and Police Station

PARK FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS:

Public Restrooms	Yes
Tennis Court	No
Playground Equipment	No
Walking Trails	No
Benches	Yes
Parking Facilities	Yes
Sports Field	No
Pier/Dock (Viewing)	Yes
Swimming Area	Yes
Other Improvements	Picnic Tables; Sandy Beach; Kayak/Paddle Board Launch; Drinking Fountains; Seasonal Lifeguards; Bicycle Racks

**HISTORY**

The north half of the Medina Beach Property was donated to the City in 1960 by the Medina

Improvement Club. Situated at the south point of Evergreen Point Road at the historic site of a former ferry terminal that connected Medina with Seattle, the park is a favorite destination year-round. The park offers swimming areas for all ages. Under the supervision of seasonal lifeguards, older children are able to swim out to a float while younger ones wade at the water's edge or play on the beach. The site provides views of Seattle, Mercer Island, and Mount Rainier. The site also serves as the municipal hub of the City. The Police Station, City Council Chambers, City Manager, Department Directors, and Administrative Staff are all located within City Hall on the site. The Planning Commission, Park Board, Emergency Preparedness Committee, and other volunteer groups regularly meet at the City Hall to conduct business.

**Fairweather Nature Preserve and Park (Neighborhood Park)**

LOCATION: At NE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, bounded by Evergreen Point Road on the west, NE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street on the north, 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE on the east, and SR 520 on the south.

SIZE: 10.1 acres.

FEATURES:

- Passive Natural Forest with Walking Trails
- Stream and Natural Wetland
- Active Sports field

PARK FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS:

Public Restrooms	No
Tennis Court	Yes
Playground Equipment	No
Walking Trails	Yes
Benches	No
Parking Facilities	Yes
Playfield	Yes
Pier/Dock	No
Swimming Area	No
Other Improvements	Practice Tennis Back board; Basketball Hoop; Drinking Fountains; Pickleball Courts

HISTORY

Fairweather Park is composed of two distinct public use areas. The western half of the park is an active use area with a small playfield, two tennis courts, a tennis practice back board, basketball hoop, and parking area that were developed in 1962 during the initial SR 520 construction. The eastern half of the park remains as a natural forest preserve with a stream passing through it and winding walking trails. The northeastern portion of the forest area is a natural wetland that drains to the east to Fairweather Bay. This forest is one of the last standing natural forests in the area and is as close to a walk in the deep woods as one can get in the heart of a city.

**Viewpoint Park (Neighborhood Park)**

LOCATION: Overlake Drive West and 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE

SIZE: 0.15 acres (includes street right-of-way).

FEATURES:

- Viewing Area
- Waterfront Access

PARK FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS:

Public Restrooms	No
Tennis Court	No
Playground Equipment	No
Walking Trails	No
Benches	Yes
Parking Facilities	Yes
Playfield	No
Pier/Dock	Yes
Swimming Area	No
Other Improvements	Picnic Tables

HISTORY

Having originally been used as a ferry dock and the previous site of the Medina Baby Home, Viewpoint Park is now a passive recreational park and is one of Medina’s lesser-known parks. The upper portion of the park is a small triangle of land situated near the south end of 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and Overlake Drive West. The triangle area is landscaped with the center of the area planted in grass with a picnic table and a seating area. The lower portion of the park has a limited parking area and a meandering pathway from the parking area down to the park area by Lake Washington. This area has a picnic table and a pier. The waterfront area provides views of Lake Washington, the Seattle skyline, and the Olympic Mountains.

**Lake Lane (Neighborhood Park)**

LOCATION: 3300 Block of 78<sup>th</sup> Place NE

SIZE: 0.10 acres (street right-of-way).

FEATURES:

- Waterfront Access

PARK FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS:

Public Restrooms	No
Tennis Court	No
Playground Equipment	No
Walking Trails	No
Benches	Yes
Parking Facilities	No
Playfield	No
Pier/Dock	Yes
Swimming Area	No
Other Improvements	Sewer Lift Station

## HISTORY

Lake Lane was also previously used as a ferry dock in Medina, and is now another of Medina’s smaller parks. The park is found at the end of a narrow driveway that extends from 78<sup>th</sup> Place NE to a private residence located on the north side of the park. The park fronts on Lake Washington and is only accessible by walking. No parking areas are provided. The park has a public pier where one can view Fairweather Bay, Hunts Point, and the City of Kirkland to the north.

### Unimproved Rights-of-Way (Community Trail System)

LOCATION: Unimproved Rights-of-Way (see Figure 9 for mapped unimproved rights-of-way).

SIZE: approximately 0.7 miles of right-of-way.

#### FEATURES:

- Unimproved right-of-way

Some of Medina’s unimproved rights-of-way have pedestrian and recreational improvements, sometimes called the Community Trail System (formerly the Indian Trail). There are multiple segments of this unimproved right-of-way located throughout Medina, as is shown on Figure 9, Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.

### Other Recreational Facilities

#### POINTS LOOP TRAIL SYSTEM

This was created in 1962 by the construction of the initial SR 520 freeway. Points Loops Trail connects the local communities of Yarrow Point, Hunts Point, Clyde Hill, and Medina. The Points Loop Trail consists of marked routes within each community, as well as a portion of the Regional SR 530 Trail that runs north of the 520 highway. Maintenance of the SR 520 Trail resides with WSDOT.

#### EVERGREEN POINT ROAD LID & REGIONAL SR 520 TRAIL

Since completion of the SR 520 Evergreen lid (wide bridge overcrossing) in 2014, approximately two acres of landscaped passive park area has been provided by WSDOT for regional public use, including the viewing area on the west side of the lid with a view to the Seattle skyline to the west.

The lid area includes a park & ride lot with 50 parking spaces, and a transit access facility with elevator and walking steps down to the freeway bus stop area on either side of the freeway. A seating area and steps have been provided at the southwest corner of the Fairweather playfield to provide access from the freeway lid to the City park. The lid is owned, operated, and maintained by WSDOT.

The lid also incorporates the new WSDOT SR 520 Regional Trail that connects Seattle via a new floating bridge with the eastside communities of Medina, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Kirkland, and Bellevue. The new WSDOT SR 520 Regional Trail is owned by WSDOT but operated by King County. The WSDOT SR 520 Regional Trail has been constructed along the north side of the freeway. A trail connection from the Regional Trail to the south end of 80<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in Hunts Point has also been developed WSDOT.

#### OVERLAKE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB (PRIVATE GOLF COURSE)

Located at 8000 NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street, the golf course provides approximately 140 acres of open space for members of the club to play golf. The property also contains a private club house and a swimming pool.

#### ST. THOMAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND (PRIVATE SCHOOL)

Located at 8300 NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the school has 5.62 acres of land. Facilities include a playground and play structures for students.

#### THREE POINTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND (PRIVATE SCHOOL ON PUBLIC PROPERTY)

Located at 7800 NE 28<sup>th</sup> Street, the school has approximately four acres of land. The playfield is in the westerly portion of the elementary school property that is leased from the Bellevue School District by Bellevue Christian School. The playground has a grass sport field, play structure, and covered play area for the students.

#### MEDINA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (PUBLIC SCHOOL)

Located at 8001 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the school has approximately 7.88 acres of land. Facilities include a multipurpose playfield, play structures, and covered play areas for students.

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Medina is a fully built-out residential community with limited ability for growth. The City has 12 acres of park space in public ownership for every 1,000 residents (not including the schools or the private golf course), which is expected to satisfy the recreational needs of the community based on park space metrics typically provided by agencies nationwide.

### EVALUATION OF FACILITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While residents enjoy abundant park space, the Medina Comprehensive Plan sets forth goals for the need to maintain and enhance existing park space and to acquire new park space when such opportunities arise.

#### Medina Park

This park offers both active and passive uses. The tennis court represents a significant investment and is frequently utilized for games and practice.

The children's playground area next to the tennis court is frequently used. There are two climbing apparatus, two swing sets, a circular rotating toy (NOVA), a seesaw, a sandbox, and some movable toys that have been donated by residents for children to use in the play area. In 2016, Medina Park Playground was expanded to add the Explorer Dome and Seesaw structures. At that time, the city also included an accessible ramp on the east entrance to meet then-current federal requirements. In 2022, the City replaced the older outdated structures and incorporated an accessible design that offers a range of play experiences for children of varying abilities. This project has made needed playground improvements that include new play equipment, new wood chip surfacing, and relocation of the sandpit. The improvements benefit the community as a whole and encourage free play for the children.

A picnic shelter has also been installed at the park for use during inclement weather.

The Public Works Shop and Yard are located in the southwest portion of the active park and is screened from the park by adequate landscaping.

### **Medina Beach Park**

The primary use of this park is beach access and swimming. From Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend, the city staff's lifeguards and provides swimming areas for the community. Power boats operating too close to the shore create wakes. The City should maintain Medina Beach Park to protect the health and safety of all users, including swimmers.

The City Hall emergency generator and enclosure intrude into the former park area and, if possible, should be placed underground or moved to a non-use area of the park.

### **Fairweather Park and Nature Preserve**

The playfield area is a practice sports field of grass. The field becomes too muddy for play during the winter months. A priority need is to improve the field drainage for use year round. The parks proximity to the freeway should be accounted for in the screening of the park in the area that is not at the gateway to the park.

The nature preserve should be maintained in its natural state by continuing to remove invasive plants and ivy, and to replant native species as trees are lost due to wind and age.

The winding natural trails should continue to be maintained with natural wood steps and remain rustic in appearance. Fallen trees should remain in place, except where they obstruct a trail. Wayfinding maps should be considered to assist hikers and trail walkers.

### **Viewpoint Park**

The park triangular overlook (viewing area) provides unique views of the Seattle skyline. The recently added picnic bench provides added ability for users to eat lunch or picnic. It is recommended that a drinking fountain be added.



The beach front area provides a place for picnics, dock access, and swimming at the pier end.

### **Lake Lane**

The dock is the only current park physical asset at the park. Adding a bench or picnic table would be beneficial. Milfoil continues to invade the beach front area and should be controlled.

### **NE 26<sup>th</sup> Street Unimproved Right-of-Way**

The present trail is an asset that should be maintained in its natural condition. Limited plantings that will enhance the natural appearance of the trail are encouraged to be native and drought tolerant.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND POLICIES**

The City's large open spaces are the defining elements of Medina's community character. The open space and parks provide a major recreational resource for the City's residents. Existing parks and open spaces should be maintained and enhanced pursuant to Medina's needs and as opportunities arise for improvement. The City shall seek to acquire properties to enhance waterfront access, retain existing views and/or preserve important environmental resources. The following are the goals and policies guiding the City's park plan.

### **GOALS**

- PO-G1 To maintain and enhance Medina's parks and open spaces to meet the City's needs and to reduce climate-altering pollution, especially in areas of the City that are home to historically underserved communities. An example of a priority item is the reconstruction of the playfield or bicycle racks at Fairweather Park for use year-round.
- PO-G2 To expand and improve the City parks and open spaces through property acquisitions as special funding allows and when opportunities arise, or through funding opportunities learned of or created via regional collaboration, especially to connect open spaces in the City with regional open space networks.
- PO-G3 To identify annual revenue and special funding sources through regional collaboration to maintain and improve parks and open spaces.
- PO-G4 To work collaboratively with other public property owners and operators, including WSDOT, King County, other nearby cities, and the School District, to encourage the owners of the open space and recreational facilities to maintain the facilities to appropriate standards, and to keep the properties safe and clean for all users.
- PO-G5 To work collaboratively with other public property owners and operators, including WSDOT, King County, other nearby cities, and the School District, to advocate for the open space and recreational facilities provided by those agencies to remain available for use by Medina residents as well as the public in general.

### **POLICIES**

- PO-P1 The City should seek to acquire additional waterfront access along the shoreline, when opportunities arise and continue to maintain the public piers.

- PO-P2 The City should seek to develop additional view parks, particularly in areas of the City that are home to historically underserved members of the community.
- PO-P3 The City should seek to acquire view rights to preserve the views of view parks.
- PO-P4 The City should preserve easements to protect unique trees and tree groupings, valuing their role in preventing and mitigating for harmful environmental pollutants, including light, air, noise, soil, and structural hazards, and overall protecting habitat and contributing to the ecological function of the community.
- PO-P5 The City should consider seeking participation from the Overlake Golf & Country Club to improve the landscaping along the Overlake Golf & Country Club frontage.
- PO-P6 The City should retain the Fairweather Nature Preserve in its natural state and provide maintenance only when necessary, valuing its role in the City’s green infrastructure that, when protected, reduces climate-altering pollution, sequesters and stores carbon, and increases the resilience of communities to climate change impacts.
- PO-P7 The City should improve the Fairweather playfield for year-round use and could consider the addition of public relief facilities at the playfield.
- PO-P8 The City should develop a long-term landscaping and maintenance plan to maintain Medina Beach Park and Medina Park in a manner that is consistent with and enhances public use for all, regardless of race, social, or economic status.
- PO-P9 The City should consider participating in regional collaboration or strategy in supporting open space networks that connect the region, such as connecting City open spaces with those identified in the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Regional Open Space Conservation Plan. The City should participate in strategizing and funding the protection of open space lands that provide valuable functions, including:
- a) Ecosystem linkages and migratory corridors crossing jurisdictional boundaries;
  - b) Physical or visual separation delineating growth boundaries or providing buffers between incompatible uses;
  - c) Active and passive outdoor recreation opportunities;
  - d) Wildlife habitat and migration corridors that preserve and enhance ecosystem resiliency in the face of urbanization and climate change;
  - e) Preservation of ecologically sensitive, scenic, or cultural resources;
  - f) Urban green space, habitats, and ecosystems;
  - g) Forest resources, and;
  - h) Food production potential.