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Introduction

Project Background

This document addresses comments and questions submitted by the public in summer 2024 during the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review and comment period for the Little Lake Forest Trailhead and Amenities project. In 2021, King County Parks and Recreation acquired the 5.1-acre parcel (Parcel 1920079101) in unincorporated King County approximately a quarter mile from the City of Enumclaw’s urban growth boundary. The purpose of the acquisition was to create a trailhead that can serve as the public access point to the adjacent, King County-owned 155-acre Little Lake Forest. The King County Parks property hosts the entry to the existing road and back country trails to Little Lake through a dense forest, including a newly-created trail around Little Lake.

The Little Lake Forest Trailhead project includes several phases. The first step will be the demolition of the existing house and the outbuildings on the parcel. The demolition work is scheduled to start this fall and is independent of this SEPA process. The trailhead project Phase 1 includes construction of the parking lot and two turnouts on the sole access road, SE 292nd Avenue. There will also be site grading, stormwater infrastructure and walkways. The trailhead project Phase 2 includes the parking lot amenities like a vault toilet, picnic shelter, benches, picnic tables, and a small play area.

Project documents including a rendering of the trailhead are available on the King County Parks websites: [Infrastructure Improvements](#) & [Public Notices](#).

Project Schedule

Demolition – House and Outbuildings – Fall 2024

Phase 1 – Parking Lot and Stormwater Facility – Spring/Summer 2025

Phase 2 – Trailhead Amenities – Fall 2025

General

1. Will the private road, SE 434th Street, become an entrance to the trailhead?

No, the private road, SE 434th Street, will not become an entrance to the trailhead. The project parcel (Parcel 1920079101) currently has two vehicle entrances; 292nd Ave SE and SE 434th Street. The public access road is 292nd Ave SE, which enters the project parcel from the south and is currently a dead end. This public road will be modified as part of the project to serve as the sole entrance to the trailhead. The public road will be the only entrance where vehicles and equipment will be allowed to enter the project parcel during the house demolition, construction of the parking lot, installation of the amenities and as access to the trailhead, and operation of the trailhead.

King County Parks asked its consultants and all utility representatives working on the project to access the project parcel via 292nd Ave SE. The electricity from PSE enters the project parcel underground in the northwest corner of the project parcel. This location is adjacent to the private road SE 434th Street. For the SEPA public notices, there were three SEPA boards posted for the project for maximum awareness of the project by neighbors and current park property trail users. We have made it clear to King County staff, consultants and anyone who is working on this project that there should be no future access to the property from SE 434th St.

To ensure that the private road will not be used as a trailhead entrance, King County Parks is addressing the public's concern in several ways.

1. King County Parks received an easement from the City of Enumclaw in 2020 to maintain the 292nd Ave SE access road as an entrance to the trailhead.
2. King County Parks will add signage near the entrance to SE 434th Street that there is no public trailhead access.
3. King County Parks is removing the address of park through the King County Assessor's office. The current address is 29103 SE 434th Street. It is typical that Parks properties do not have a street address.
4. King County Parks will contact Google Maps routes to guide park users to the trailhead via the 292nd Ave SE access road at the south entrance.
5. The final project design will include removal of the northwest entrance to SE 434th Street from inside the project parcel. The design may include boulders and shrubs to block vehicle access.

2. Will the proposed restrooms be pit toilets where the waste can contaminate the groundwater?

The proposed restrooms for the trailhead will be vault toilets where the waste is collected and routinely vacuumed via a vacuum truck and appropriately disposed off-site. The language of "pit toilet" was used in the SEPA Environmental Checklist meaning that the toilets will not be flush toilets. The waste from the proposed restrooms will be contained in impervious vaults below ground. The waste will have no connection to the soils and will not infiltrate into the soils or groundwater. Similar restrooms are used at other King County Parks trailheads including Pinnacle Peak Trailhead also in Enumclaw.

3. What hours will the public have access to the trailhead?

A new gate will be installed at the south entrance to the trailhead. The King County staff will open the gate by 8 am and lock the gate at dusk. The dusk closing time depends on the season.

4. What areas of the trailhead could generate noise?

The parking lot design includes car stalls and truck with horse trailer stalls. There will be horses loading and unloading in the parking lot. The design also includes a small play area for young children. This play area may include a small, manufactured playhouse placed on a soft surface. The intent of the play area is to provide an environment with features that blend into the surrounding landscape. It will not be a traditional play area with swings, slides, or similar equipment.

5. What was the process to inform the neighbors about the proposed trailhead?

Community engagement meetings were held with the public when the property was acquired in 2018 and 2019. In addition to requests for equestrian-friendly trailhead, requests were made for an environmentally sustainable natural play area and an ADA trail to the lake.

King County Parks staff presented the 2-page, color rendering of the 60% parking lot and amenities design at the Enumclaw Plateau Community Association on March 19, 2024.

The SEPA Public Notice was then issued in July 2024 to solicit additional feedback from the community.

6. How was the parking lot sized for the project?

For the parking lot design, the design team balanced several elements including available space on the site, the size of the parking lot, maintaining the maximum trees on the project parcel, and area for the stormwater system. Currently vehicles already park along 292nd Ave SE to access trails on this property. The parking lot was sized to accommodate existing users and the additional capacity that is expected once the trailhead is formal. The parking area was also sized to accommodate trucks with horse trailers based on feedback received during community engagement meetings. There is an area in the north of the project parcel that will not be impacted by the project and the existing trees will provide a natural boundary between the adjacent parcels. In addition, King County Parks will incorporate planting native species with thorns, like nootka rose, to grow as a natural fence which should deter trailhead users from leaving the project parcel. King County Parks will also install property boundary signage to make it clear where public property ends, and private property begins.

7. How will the trailhead impact wildlife in the area?

The project parcel was previously developed as a single-family residence. It currently contains a mix of habitats with open areas with grass and areas with trees, as well as existing manmade structures. The proposed trailhead will remove the existing structures and will be constructed in the open area that is currently grass. The trailhead design will include 0.5 acre of new native plantings to

specifically designed to enhance wildlife habitat. It will also include additional landscaping which includes evergreen trees, deciduous trees, shrubs and groundcover. With these measures incorporated into the design, no net loss of wildlife habitat function is expected.

King County Parks owns 155 acres adjacent to the project parcel that is forested and provides habitat for birds and other small mammals. King County Parks manages its open space and natural lands in a way that protects habitat for important fish and wildlife while also providing passive recreation opportunities.

7A. Why were the restrooms, picnic area and possible play area located in the northern part of the project parcel near SE 434th Street?

The design team looked at several locations for the restrooms, picnic area, and play area. We ultimately chose the north side because:

- Engineering team eliminated the area to the west because of challenges with the topography.
- In general, the current configuration of the overall site is most cost-effective due to less grading and tree removal.
- Horses will be entering/exiting trails on the south side and load/unloading on the east and west sides of the parking area. We wanted to keep the park users picnicking and playing separate from the horses.

The design plans include planting trees around the restrooms, picnic area, and play area to provide visual screening and some (albeit limited) noise reduction. We will also be retaining as many existing trees as possible.

Trails

8. Why build a trailhead to provide access only to Little Lake, a relatively short trail system?

There are trails for horses and for people between the proposed trailhead and Little Lake. There is a newly completed trail around the lake and a pedestrian trail that was built as a spur off the main trail to the lake. The public already accesses these trails by parking vehicles along 292nd Ave SE. Providing formal parking and improving 292nd Ave SE will provide a safer experience for trail users and the surrounding community.

There will be no public access off King County property to adjacent private property.

9. What is the difference between a trailhead and a parking lot?

There is no major difference between a trailhead and a parking lot. The terms can be used interchangeably. For each trailhead, there is typically infrastructure and amenities that are built to support the parking lot. For this trailhead project, there will be a stormwater detention system, an entrance gate, sidewalks, restrooms, a picnic shelter, picnic tables, a

natural play area, trash cans, electrical vehicle chargers, informational kiosks, a park sign and other elements that support the parking lot.

House and Well House

10. Is the well on the project property shared with other properties?

The project parcel has a well, pump and well house on site. King County Parks staff reviewed the well logs, coordinated with the Washington Department of Ecology (who regulates wells in Washington State), and followed the transfer of usage process to document conversion of the well from private to commercial. Since the well was below the usage threshold a permit was not needed to convert the well to commercial use. The well is used by the project parcel only and is not shared with other properties.

11. Why was the parking lot placed where it may be seen from the adjacent properties?

The parking lot was sited on the project parcel adjacent to the main entrance to the trails in an area that would minimize impacts to existing trees. The location of the parking lot also allows for a buffer in the north and western areas of the project parcel to the adjacent parcels.

12. How will King County Parks mitigate for the crime that has happened at existing trailheads?

King County Parks works to mitigate crime at existing trailheads using several methods. For the proposed project, the trailhead will be closed to the public every evening at dusk. The parking lot design does not include lights so the trailhead will be closed to the public before dark. King County Parks also has two Deputy Sheriffs on staff to respond to crime in the parks.

13. How will the proposed trailhead impact property values?

King County Parks is committed to maintaining positive relationships with our neighbors and is not aware of new facilities negatively impacting property values. We continually design and maintain our facilities in accordance with national, state, and local safety guidelines and standards. If you observe any safety, damage, or other concerns at our facilities, please report them using any of the following methods; by phone at 206-477-4527, via email at parksinfo@kingcounty.gov or on See Click Fix (<http://www.parksfeedback.com/>).

If you have any questions regarding your property values, please contact the King County Assessor's office at 206-296-7300 or assessor.info@kingcounty.gov.

SEPA Notice Details

14. Why was the SEPA Notice only sent in English language?

The SEPA Environmental Checklist and the SEPA Determination of Non-Significance were sent to the public in English language only. King County Parks is currently working on a plan to expand its

translation and transcreation services to include technical documents such as the SEPA Environmental Checklist and the SEPA Determination of Non-Significance. Parks expects to be issuing SEPA Determination of Non-Significance documents in at least the top two languages for a project area by the end of 2024. In the meantime, translations are available upon request by contacting parksinfo@kingcounty.gov or 206-477-4527.

15. Why are the dates inconsistent on the SEPA Checklist and the date received?

King County Parks staff created the SEPA Environmental Checklist and formally completed the checklist with the Division Director's signature ahead of the public notice issuance date, which is standard process for SEPA. The public notice issuance process includes mailing physical letters via United States Postal Service (USPS), publishing in the Seattle Times, sending email notifications, and installing signboards at the site. Parks errs on giving the public as much time to comment as possible, and so we install signboards and postmark the USPS letters in advance of the official public notice issuance date. In this case, King County Parks staff sent the letters via the USPS on July 5, 2024 to ensure letters would be in mailboxes by the official issuance date of July 9, 2024. The letters arrived in as early as 1 day for some but took several days to arrive for others. King County Parks staff does our best to coordinate dates as much as possible but, it's not always possible to sync them up exactly. Thank you for your understanding.

For more project information:

King County Parks Websites

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/nature-recreation/parks-recreation/king-county-parks/parks/public-notices>

<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/nature-recreation/parks-recreation/king-county-parks/capital-projects/infrastructure-improvements-at-existing-sites>