

Recommendations of the Public Lands Stewardship Committee

City of Bainbridge Island Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park District Bainbridge Island Land Trust Bloedel Reserve IslandWood

December 14, 2006

*“The island’s environmental resources are finite and must be maintained...”
Comprehensive Plan Vision*

Background

Over the past decade, the volume of land owned by the City of Bainbridge Island (COBI) and the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park and Recreation District (BIMPRD) has grown significantly. Except for land owned by COBI for City use (*e.g.*, land surrounding City well heads), virtually all of this land is intended for some form of public use. These public lands total more than 2,000 acres – about 11.4 percent of the island’s total acreage. The Bainbridge Island Land Trust (BILT) holds conservation easements on over 1000 acres. In addition, Bloedel Reserve and IslandWood own over 400 acres that is open to the public on a limited basis.

The Public Land Stewardship Committee was charged with making recommendations on how best to manage the public portion of this property as well as any additional public land that is acquired in the future. Bearing in mind the first two goals of the Comprehensive Plan (“Preserve open space and the character of the natural landscape” and “Preserve environmentally sensitive areas”), the committee also developed recommendations for changes in the way open space is acquired, based on its recommendations for stewardship. The Committee believes these changes will promote more coordinated stewardship and improved planning of public open space acquisition. (Appendix A: Committee Recommendations)

Methodology

The committee was asked to: (1) review current stewardship activities (both private and public) and make recommendations for better coordination; (2) review the current inventory of public lands and make recommendations for ownership and stewardship of these properties; (3) develop goals over the next 3-5 years to guide the land conservation activities of the City and Park District; (4) review funding options for open space acquisition and stewardship and make recommendations on these options to the City and the Park District; and (5) review the work of staff, citizen groups, and volunteers and make recommendations to promote cooperation and eliminate duplication.

The committee began its work by reviewing the mission of each of the organizations involved in stewarding land open to the public – City, Park District, Open Space Commission, BILT, Bloedel and IslandWood. (Appendix B: Participating organizations with general mission statements.) The committee asked to have prepared a list and map of all publicly owned properties as well as Bloedel and IslandWood. (Appendix C: Inventory of City and Park District properties and accompanying map)

In determining whether changes should be made in ownership or management of a property, committee members agreed that there were three key considerations: (1) defining the intended use of a public property, (2) determining which entity was in the best position to steward the property over the long term, and (3) determining whether the public had access to a property for either education or recreation. The committee also recognized that it could be possible for the City or the Park District to own a property with no public access, such as a wetland.

Recommendations

Safeguarding the natural resources of the Island is a goal shared by both the City and the Park District. Nonetheless, after reviewing the current inventory of public open space and reviewing the mission statements of the respective organizations, the committee agreed on the following recommendations. The nineteen recommendations are grouped under seven headings: (1) Ownership; (2) Stewardship; (3) Acquisition; (4) Funding; (5) Citizen groups and volunteers; (6) Trails and road ends; and (7) Farm properties. (Appendix A: Summary of Recommendations)

1. Ownership

Recommendation A. The committee recommends that, if a public property walks, talks and looks like a park, it should ultimately be owned, operated and maintained by the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park District (BIMPD). (Appendix C – lists the committee’s recommendations for changes in ownership of properties currently owned by the City.) Exceptions to this recommendation are:

- Pritchard Park – Because of issues related to Pritchard Park’s status as a Superfund site, the City and the Park District should continue to share responsibility for this park. The Park District will take the lead in planning capital projects for the park and eventually will be responsible for managing and maintaining the park.
- Strawberry Plant Property – The Park District should take the lead in planning capital improvements on the property, and the property should be transferred to Park District ownership.

- Farm properties – The committee decided to make no recommendation on the farm properties because it had insufficient information about likely future activities on these properties. (See recommendation on farm properties below.)
- Waterfront Park – The committee recommends that this property remain in City ownership for the next several years during the development of improvements. When capital improvements on the property are completed, it could be transferred to Park District ownership.
- The committee recommends that the upland portion of the Manitou Beach property (also known as the Kane property) be sold.

2. Stewardship of Public Lands/Parks

Stewardship includes implementation of one-time capital projects, such as construction of trails and parking areas, and ongoing management of park operations. Currently, the City and the Park District share responsibility for such stewardship activities of public lands and parks. Beginning in 2004, senior staff members from the City and Park District have met monthly to discuss stewardship issues and to coordinate their activities. Some of the results of this cooperation are described in Appendix D.

While the committee supports these efforts, the committee believes that adoption of the following recommendations would generate additional efficiencies. To that end, the committee makes these recommendations:

Recommendation B: The committee recommends that the BIMPD be responsible for planning and completing capital improvements on open space properties, such as construction of trails and parking areas. The City and the Park District should develop plans for properties to be transferred to the Park District on a case-by-case basis; the Park District would be responsible for funding on-going management and operations.

Recommendation C: If the City chooses to retain ownership of a park property, the City should create a program to develop and maintain that park relying on its own resources.

Recommendation D: If the City retains ownership of a park property for a period of time with the ultimate goal of transferring that property to the Park District, the committee recommends that a written management agreement be drafted during the interim period. The agreement should address specific activities that will be carried out and corresponding funding plans.

(See Appendix C for recommendations on management responsibility for each property owned by the City or Park District.)

Conservation easements. BILT holds and monitors conservation easements on privately owned properties. Currently, some Park District lands are subject to conservation easements held by the Bainbridge Island Land Trust. The Park District is legally required

to adhere to those agreements. Under the terms of those agreements, BILT must annually monitor the Park District's compliance with the restrictions outlined within those easements. BILT and the Park District then work together to correct any deviations from those restrictions. The Park District also holds conservation easements on some privately owned lands.

Recommendation E: Where Park District conservation easements are more closely aligned to the mission and criteria of BILT, consideration should be given to transfer of those easements to BILT.

3. Coordination of Acquisition of Public Lands/Parks

Over the past decade, public lands have been acquired in a variety of ways – *e.g.*, through public bond levies, such as the Open Space Bond Levy; through activities of private organizations, such as BILT; through private-public partnerships; and through private *ad hoc* fundraising groups, such as the group that raised funds to acquire Blakely Harbor Park.

Recommendation F: The committee recommends greater coordination among all parties in the acquisition of open space and park properties. (Note: This coordination would not be required for property acquired for purposes such as watershed or habitat protection where there is no public access.) Specifically, the committee recommends continued close coordination between the Park District and the City and private organizations, such as the Bainbridge Island Land Trust or others, that raise funds to acquire a property that is intended for Park District or City ownership and/or operation.

City-Park District Coordination. In the 2007 budget, City funds are designated to finance open space acquisition. In addition, properties may be acquired wholly or in part by private organizations. Recommendation G: The Committee recommends, in the short term, that public open space acquisitions be financed by City funds as funding permits.

In situations where the Park District will likely be responsible for managing newly acquired properties, the committee recommends establishment of a more efficient arrangement to coordinate open space acquisition with the Park District. The Committee considered five options for implementing this coordination:

- (1) The City would purchase an open space property and then transfer the property to the Park District.
- (2) The City would purchase an open space property and concurrently transfer it to the Park District.
- (3) Based on recommendation(s) from the Open Space Commission, the City and the Park District would agree on a property(ies) to be acquired. If the Park District is to eventually own the property, then the Park District should purchase it, with the City transferring the funds to the Park District to pay for that acquisition. (Those

funds would cover all costs of acquisition, including the costs of surveys, legal fees and other support activities.)

- (4) The City would make a grant to the Park District to acquire properties recommended by the Open Space Commission. The City Council would approve individual OSC recommendations for property acquisition; the Park District would then receive and approve OSC recommendations and acquire the properties.
- (5) The City would make a grant to the Park District to administer the Open Space program, independent of City review. The Open Space Commission would report to the Park District board.

Recommendation H: The committee recommends Option 3. This option ensures coordination between the City and the Park District in the acquisition of open space properties which would ultimately be owned by the Park District, while allowing the City to retain approval authority on individual property acquisitions. It also eliminates duplication of effort and legal costs involved with property transfers from City to Park District ownership. Retaining City approval authority is necessary because City funds would be used to purchase the properties.

Park District-Private Organization Coordination. The committee recognized that, in the past, private organizations and *ad hoc* groups have raised funds to acquire properties that were turned over to the Park District for ownership and management. Such fundraising activities may continue to occur in the future.

In addition, the Bainbridge Island Land Trust has sometimes acted as an agent in acquiring properties. For example, BILT acquired the options on the Rockaway Beach and Hall properties; BILT is currently working on acquiring an option on the 5-acre Olson property adjacent to Ted Olson Park.

Negotiations for the purchase of properties are, of necessity, confidential – a fact that may make it difficult for private organizations to keep the Park District informed of their activities. Recommendation I: The Committee recommends that any private group that is seeking to acquire property intended for Park District ownership and management coordinate its acquisition activities with the Park District as early as possible in the acquisition process.

4. Funding for Acquisition and Stewardship

Funding is a key issue for both acquisition and stewardship of public parks/open space. It is unlikely that either the City or the Park District, operating independently, would ever have sufficient fundraising capacity to acquire and develop parks and open spaces to the extent desired by the community.

Recommendation J: The committee recommends that the Open Space Commission explore funding options for property acquisition, capital improvements, and ongoing stewardship, and make formal recommendations on funding to the City Council and Park District Board. These options include:

- General revenues;
- Bond levy(ies) – could be combined with levies for other activities; could specify that a set percentage of levy proceeds be dedicated to capital improvements and/or maintenance of open space properties;
- Increase in utility tax (possible limitation is that water/sewer utility taxes apply only to Winslow area);
- Increase in Real Estate Excise Tax (REET);
- Grants from state and federal sources;
- Funding from private organizations, individuals, and foundations; and
- Proceeds from sale of small parts of existing open space property(ies). At the time that a few specific properties were acquired, the Open Space Commission suggested that small parts of those properties could be sold at a future date to raise funds. The committee believes that the OSC should review those properties and provide advice to City Council about possible future property sales. In particular, the committee urges the OSC to consider selling the upland portion of the Manitou Beach property, while retaining City ownership of the beach parcel.

5. Citizen Groups and Volunteers

Along with City and Park District staff, citizen groups and volunteers play an important role in the stewardship of publicly owned property. The City's Open Space Commission has been very successful in acquiring property and trail easements that provide significant public benefits. The OSC has shared with both the City and the Park District suggestions for improvements of those properties. The City's Non-motorized Transportation Committee (NMTC) is developing an updated non-motorized transportation plan for the entire island. This year, the committee has worked with the OSC to identify the most critical trail easements needed for both transportation and recreation purposes.

Volunteers have also provided an important labor pool to the Park District, as well as helped to raise funds for individual projects. In the past, the Park District's Trails Committee helped locate, design and build trails; the committee currently provides advice to the Park District about trails, as well as organizes volunteers to build and maintain trails. (Note: There may some overlap between the work of the Trails Committee and NMTC.) Other groups, such as the Weed Warriors and BILT, provide volunteers for trail construction and removal of invasive plant species. A number of other committees (*e.g.*, Team Yeomalt Committee, Transmitter Building Committee, Senior Advisory Board, Teen Advisory Board) and the Bainbridge Island Parks Foundation raise funds and provide volunteer labor for various park district projects.

Both the professional staff and the citizen volunteers are committed to providing the best possible stewardship of the Island's public properties. Citizen committees and volunteers

focus on single issues and projects. City and Park District staffs are accountable for a wide range of activities that include but are not limited to capital improvements and on-going maintenance of open space and park properties.

In some circumstances, staff and citizen volunteers have experienced miscommunications and misunderstandings. At the same time, there have also been instances of effective coordination between City staff and citizen committees. A good example of that is the recent OSC recommendation regarding Nute's Pond property on Toe Jam Hill. As the OSC was preparing its recommendation, the OSC sought assistance from the City's Public Works Department. The work of Assistant City Engineer Ross Hathaway in reviewing this property contributed to the development of contingencies in the Purchase and Sale Agreement. It also ensured that both City and Park District staff were made fully aware of the potential purchase of this property, as well as the likely need for some limited capital improvements and possible repairs for two existing dams on the property.

Recommendation K: Believing it would be helpful to improve cooperation and communication between citizen volunteers and staff, the committee recommends that the City and Park District clarify the roles, lines of reporting, and responsibilities of both staff and citizen volunteers who serve on advisory committees. The committee suggested that periodic review of the charter, membership, scope of work and priorities of citizen advisory committees/commissions be undertaken to ensure that both staff and citizen volunteers share the same understanding and expectations.

6. Trails and Road Ends

The Committee discussed whether the Park District should play a role in the construction and maintenance of trails on City property (or where the City otherwise maintains trails), and in the completion of capital projects, if any, and maintenance of road ends. One committee member suggested transferring ownership of some trails and road ends to the Park District, but others questioned whether it is legally possible for the City to transfer ownership of a road end to another entity. The committee considered whether Park District participation in trail construction and maintenance should depend on whether a trail is used primarily for recreation or as a transportation corridor between different areas of the island. The committee recognized, however, that some trails could serve both purposes.

Recommendation L: The committee recommends that the City and the Park District negotiate an agreement that addresses the construction and maintenance of specific trails located on City land or rights-of-way.

Recommendation M: The committee also recommends that the City and the Park District review road ends and determine appropriate capital improvements and management on a case-by-case or program basis.

7. Farm Properties

After lengthy discussion, the committee concluded the issue of farmlands was beyond its scope – particularly because the committee did not include any representatives from the farming community. In reaching that conclusion, the committee discussed several options for managing City-owned farm properties. These included transferring them to the Park District, contracting with a third party for management, engaging some non-profit entity, and other options for ongoing management.

The committee concluded it would be impossible to make a recommendation on the future ownership and management of farm properties without answering key questions about the public purpose(s) to be served by public ownership of farm lands. If the farm properties were to be used in a way that allowed public access for educational or recreational purposes – *e.g.*, pea patches or regular school visits – it might be possible for the Park District to manage the properties. However, if the property is a working (commercial) farm and public access is limited to a trail around the perimeter, it would likely be necessary to manage them in a different way (and without Park District assistance.) Other issues, including short-term maintenance, invasive species, and ending of short-term leases, need to be addressed.

In light of all these considerations, the committee agreed that it was essential for the City to develop a strategy for management of the farm properties within the next year. To that end, the committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation N: The committee recommends that, within the next year, the City convene a working group that includes representatives of the farm community, the City, the Park District, other organizations and the general public to (1) determine use and access to the farm property and (2) develop a plan for managing the farm properties. To avoid potential duplication of effort, the committee should have access to the 2005 American Farmland Trust Report.

Three to Five Year Goals and Implementation Strategy:

As the population of Bainbridge Island continues to grow with the accompanying increased development, the preservation and protection of open space has become increasingly critical to preserving the character of the island. Committee members fully recognize that a wide range of important public needs are competing for scarce public funds. In light of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, committee members agreed that it is more important in the near term to acquire open space than to develop those open space properties that have already been acquired.

Recommendation O: The committee recommends that the City and the Park District acquire as much open space as possible – in the words of one committee member, “Get as much as you can while you can!” The committee believes that land acquisition should be the top priority in the island’s open space program. The next four priorities are:

1. Develop trail connections.
2. Manage and maintain existing properties.
3. Implement capital improvements on existing properties.
4. Develop and implement a management plan for the farm properties.

Recommendation P: The committee recommends developing and implementing funding mechanisms for open space property acquisition, capital improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Recommendation Q: The committee recommends that the City and Park District complete the transfer of properties identified in Appendix C.

Recommendation R: The committee recommends that the City and Park District continue to look for and implement efficiencies in their operations.

Recommendation S: To begin the implementation process, the Committee recommends that Mayor Darlene Kordonowy and Park District Board Chair Sarah Mathews transmit the committee's report to the City Council, Park District Board, and senior City and Park District staff. After reviewing the recommendations, the committee recommends a joint meeting with the Mayor, Council, Park District Board, and key staff, with the PLSC as a resource, to (1) discuss the report, (2) agree on or amend the recommendations, and (3) begin to develop a work plan for implementation.

Appendix A

Committee Recommendations

Recommendation A: The committee recommends that, if a public property walks, talks and looks like a park, it should ultimately be owned, operated and maintained by the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park District (BIMPD).

Recommendation B: The committee recommends that the BIMPD be responsible for planning and completing capital improvements on park properties, such as construction of trails and parking areas. The City and the Park District should develop plans for properties to be transferred on a case-by-case basis. The Park District would be responsible for funding on-going management and operations.

Recommendation C: If the City chooses to retain ownership of a park property, the City should create a program to develop and maintain the park with its own resources.

Recommendation D: If the City retains ownership of a park property for a period of time with the ultimate goal of Park District ownership, the committee recommends a written management agreement during the interim period. The agreement should address specific actions to be accomplished and corresponding funding.

Recommendation E: Where Park District conservation easements are more closely aligned to the mission and criteria of BILT, consideration should be given to transfer of those easements to BILT.

Recommendation F: The committee recommends greater coordination among all parties – the City, the Park District, and private organizations – in the acquisition of open space and park properties.

Recommendation G: The Committee recommends, in the short term, that public open space acquisitions be financed by City funds as funding permits.

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Recommendation I: The Committee recommends that any private group that is seeking to acquire property intended for Park District ownership and management coordinate its acquisition activities with the Park District as early as possible in the acquisition process.

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stewardship, and make formal recommendations on funding to the City Council and Park District Board.

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Recommendation M: The committee recommends that the City and the Park District review road ends and determine appropriate capital improvements and management on a case-by-case or program basis.

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Recommendation O: The committee recommends that the City and the Park District acquire as much open space as possible – in the words of one committee member, “Get as much as you can while you can!” The committee believes that land acquisition should be the top priority in the island’s open space program. The next four priorities are: (1) trail connections; (2) management of existing properties; (3) capital improvements; and (4) farm properties.

Recommendation P: The committee recommends developing and adopting funding mechanisms for open space property acquisition, capital improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Recommendation Q: The committee recommends that the City and Park District complete the transfer of properties identified in Appendix C.

Recommendation R: The committee recommends that the City and Park District continue to look for and implement efficiencies in their operations.

Recommendation S: To begin the implementation process, the Committee recommends that Mayor Darlene Kordonowy and Park District Board Chair Sarah Mathews transmit the committee’s report to the City Council, Park District Board, and senior City and Park District staff. After reviewing the recommendations, the committee recommends a joint meeting with the Mayor, Council, Park District Board, and key staff, with the PSLC as a resource, to (1) discuss the report, (2) agree on or amend the recommendations, and (3) begin developing a work plan for implementation.

Appendix B

Organizations with Stewardship Responsibilities

The Committee reviewed the mission and activities of public bodies and private organizations involved in stewarding land that is open to the public.

- The mission and work of the **City** is to build and protect community. Relevant to public lands, this work includes implementing the Growth Management Act, land use planning, and protecting public land for maximum public benefit.
- The mission and work of the **Metropolitan Parks District** is to provide open space properties for public recreation and education. Some park properties are subject to conservation easements. The Park District also holds conservation easements on some privately owned properties.
- The mission of the **Bainbridge Island Land Trust** is the preservation and stewardship of the diverse natural environment of Bainbridge Island for the benefit of all. BILT provides annual monitoring of the conservation easements it holds.
- The mission of the **Open Space Commission** is to recommend acquisition and preservation of open space properties for farming or passive recreation.
- The mission of the **Bloedel Reserve** is to protect the indigenous plants and animals native to that part of the Island and to provide opportunities for the public to experience natural beauty. It holds one conservation easement on another property.
- The mission of **IslandWood** is to provide exceptional learning experiences and to inspire environmental and community stewardship.

Appendix C

Properties Owned by COBI and Park District

MICHELLE: (spreadsheet of properties with recommendations on ownership and capital improvements/ongoing management)

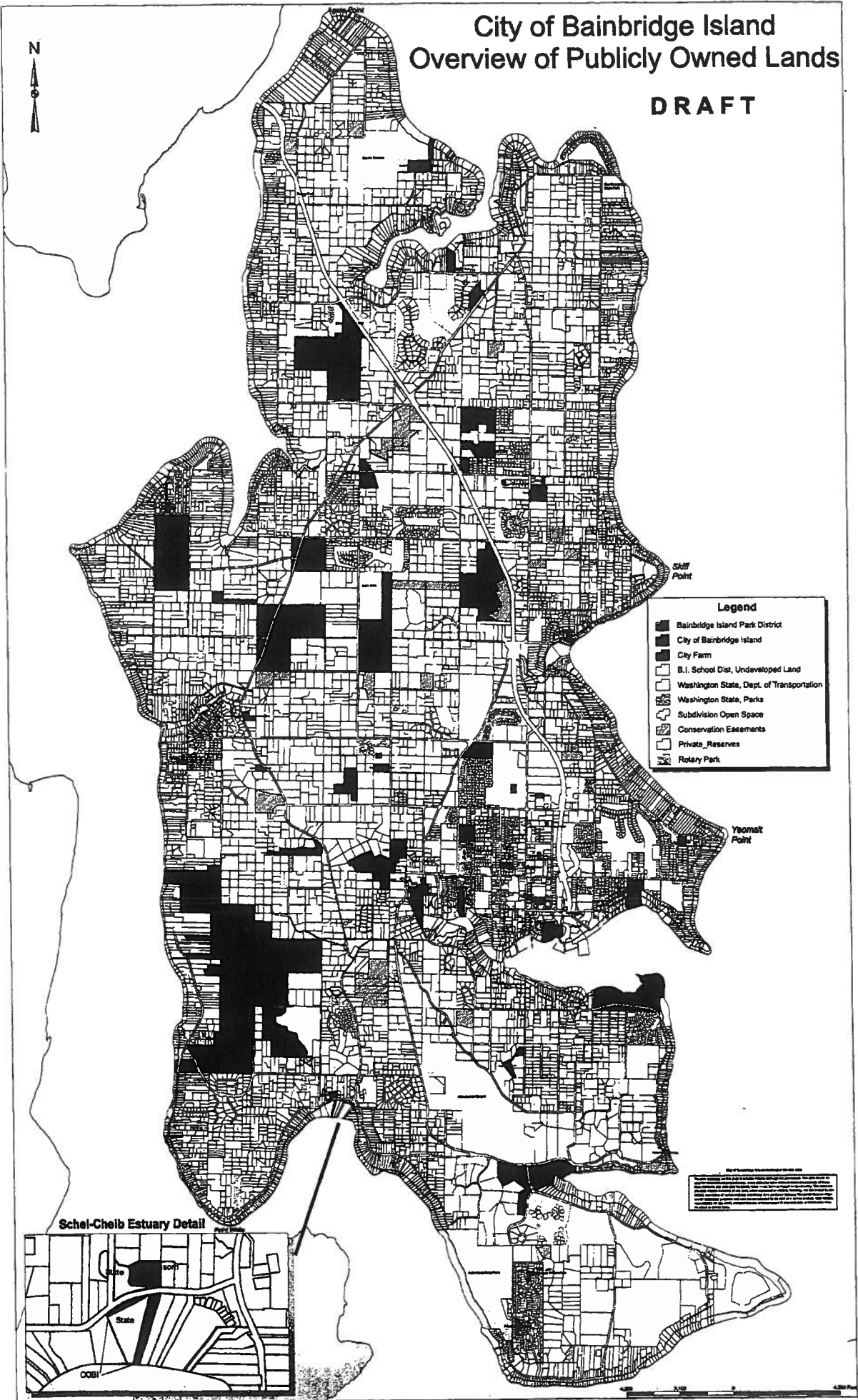
	A	B	C
1	Site Name	Use	Owners
2			Existing
3	Veterane Property	Park	BIPD
4	Strawberry Hill Park	Park	BIPD
5	Hidden Cove Park	Park	BIPD
6	Gazzam Lake Park & Wildlife Preserve	Park	BIPD
7	Grand Forest	Park	BIPD
8	Battle Point Park	Park	BIPD
9	Camp Yeomalt	Park	BIPD
10	Fairy Dell Park	Park	BIPD
11	West Pt. Madison Nature Preserve	Park	BIPD
12	Eagledale Park	Park	BIPD
13	Rotary Park Ball Fields	Park	BIPD
14	Meigs Farm	Park	BIPD
15	Ted Olson Nature Preserve	Park	BIPD
16	Manzanita Park	Park	BIPD
17	Gideon Park	Park	BIPD
18	Aquatic Center	Park	BIPD
19	Point White Dock	Park	BIPD
20	Blakely Harbor Park	Park	BIPD
21	Hall's Property	Park	BIPD
22	Peter's Property	Park	BIPD
23	T'chookwop Park	Park	BIPD
24	Spargur Loop Park	Park	BIPD
25	Rockaway Beach Park	Park	BIPD
26	Island Center Hall	Park	BIPD
27			
28	Bainbridge Performing Arts	Civic	COBI
29	Civic Center Parking	Civic	COBI
30	City Hall	Civic	COBI
31	Morales Farm	Farm	COBI
32	Bentryn Farm	Farm	COBI
33	Suyematsu Farm	Farm	COBI
34	M&E Xmas Tree Farm	Farm	COBI
35	Crawford Farm	Farm	COBI
36	Johnson Farm	Farm	COBI
37	Sadie Woodman House	Housing	COBI
38	COBI Operations and Maintenance Yard	Operations	COBI
39	Old County Rd Maintenance Site (miller Rd)	Operations	COBI
40	Vincent Rd Decant/transfer station	Operations	COBI
41	Waterfront Park	Park	COBI
42	Aaron Tot Lot	Park	COBI
43	Battle Point-Grand Forest Trail Parcels	Park	COBI
44	Parade Grounds Park	Park	COBI
45	Tot Lot off of Madison Ave	Park	COBI
46	Gazzam Lake Park & Wildlife Preserve	Park	COBI
47	Schel-Chelb Estuary	Park	COBI

**Properties Owned by COBI and Park District
Bloedel Reserve
IslandWood**

MICHELLE: (map showing City and Park District properties, Bloedel Reserve, and IslandWood)

City of Bainbridge Island Overview of Publicly Owned Lands

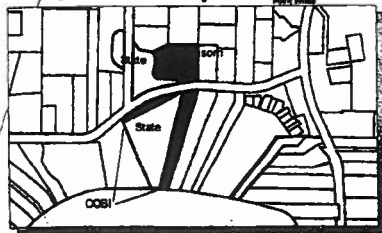
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Legend

- Bainbridge Island Park District
- City of Bainbridge Island
- City Farm
- B.I. School Dist, Undeveloped Land
- Washington State, Dept. of Transportation
- Washington State, Parks
- Subdivision Open Space
- Conservation Easements
- Private Reserves
- Rotary Park

Schel-Cheib Estuary Detail



Map prepared by the City of Bainbridge Island Planning Department, 2001. All rights reserved. This map is a draft and is not intended for use as a legal document. The City of Bainbridge Island is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this map. The City of Bainbridge Island is not responsible for any damages or losses resulting from the use of this map. The City of Bainbridge Island is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map. The City of Bainbridge Island is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map.

Appendix D

Cooperation/Coordination between COBI and Park District Current Status and Activities

Since 2004, senior City and Park District staff members have met monthly to discuss stewardship responsibilities and coordinate activities. As a result, the City and Park District have reached a better understanding of how to make better use of their respective expertise and resources. Some examples:

- The Park District has acquired equipment declared surplus by the City;
- The City has performed roadside mowing, drainage improvements (pipe installation and catch basin cleaning), road grading, street sweeping, and provided minor engineering services for the Park District;
- The Park District has performed some trail maintenance and park mowing for the City.

In addition, the City and Park District have coordinated activities on properties that have been transferred:

- Rockaway Beach Park and other open space properties
- Facilitation of coordinated planning on City/Park property, such as the Strawberry Plant property;
- Addressing property issues, such as DNR permits on Lovgren Park;
- Identifying and addressing legal issues, such as formally transferring Lovgren Park to the Park District;
- Capital and maintenance planning activities.

Staffs from the City and the Park District agree that this coordination needs to continue.