

D# 53 FEE-IN-LIEU PROVISION FOR PARKS

General Description

This docket request was made by the City of Renton Planning Division and proposes to add new provisions to RMC 4-7-149 Parks and Open Space. These new provisions would allow developers the opportunity to pay a fee-in-lieu for required common open space and a fee-in-lieu could be paid for required tot lots on vested King County projects. Currently, Title IV requires common open space in the R-10 and R-14 zones and within Design Districts A, C, and D. This concept was first identified during review of Docket #23 (#D-23) *Housing*. However, this particular revision of #D-23 was removed from the docket process to allow more time for staff to work with other City Departments. City Council approved a similar item as a part of #D-23, which permitted Public Trail Improvements to occur as a substitute to common open space in R-10 and R-14 zones, where such trail had been identified within the Renton Trails and Bicycle Master Plan or an adopted Community Plan.

After additional work with the Community Services Department, staff proposes to expand the concept identified during the review of #D-23 to permit the Trail Improvements substitution for common open space, in all areas of the City where common open space is required (i.e. add Design District A, C, D). In addition, staff proposes to add fee-in-lieu provisions for such development sites that have a requirement for common open space, that are located within a 1/4 mile of a public park, and that currently have safe and easy pedestrian access to such public park. Approval of payment of a fee-in-lieu of common open space or Trail Improvements substitutions would be subject to review by the Planning Division. This review would ensure that the reduction in common open space would not negatively impact the project and ensure that the nearby public park or trail is an integral part to the development design. Furthermore, it shall be demonstrated that a public park or trail would provide the same benefits to the development and its patrons, as the common open space would provide.

The fee would be based upon the monetary value of the required improvements for the common open space plus the monetary value of the land area required to be placed in common open space. An estimate of improvement value and an appraisal would be submitted to the City for approval by the Community Services Department. This fee would be allocated for park acquisition and development projects, not park maintenance. Conceptually, if there is an existing public park/trail within a 1/4 mile of a development, individuals can reasonably walk to such park and utilize the City's Public Park System instead of developing a "pocket park" on the subject site. The provisions for common open space are intended to provide an amenity to patrons of such establishment. A public park/trail would provide this amenity to the same degree if not a greater degree than a "pocket park", if the public park/trail is within walking distance and is incorporated into the development of the subject site as if it was part of such development.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

The proposed changes could permit additional units on a development site that may not have been built without the fee-in-lieu option. However, the additional residential units would not be permitted to exceed the density within the zone therefore maintaining consistency with the Comprehensive Plan's identified growth rate. The proposal would not have an effect on rate of development and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

The proposal is not anticipated to have an effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities. However, the additional fees collected by a fee-in-lieu program may allow the City to provide new or improved parks facilities.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

The proposal is not anticipated to have an effect on the rate of population and employment growth.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

The addition of a fee-in-lieu option for common open space would allow for flexibility during development, if an existing park is within the vicinity of the subject site. Furthermore, the addition of this provision to Title IV would expand funding opportunities for City park development and land acquisition. The Comprehensive Plans supports these proposed amendments in Policy P-15, which states "*Actively seek funding from a variety of sources to help implement a park acquisition and development program*" and Policy P-51 which states "*Expand the open space network as population and employment densities increase.*"

Additionally, Policy P-81 ensures that development adjacent to trails should be designed to minimize impact on such trail system. This policy supports the expansion of the Trail Improvement substitution option for common open space. For example, if a developer chooses to use this option, the expansion of an identified trail would be designed at the same time as the adjacent development. The result of this cohesive design process would ensure Policy P-81 was met. Based on the above mentioned Policies, the Plan objectives are being met and would remain valid and desirable.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

The proposed amendment is not anticipated to have an effect on general land values or housing costs.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

No specific capital improvements or expenditures are associated with this proposal.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The proposed changes are consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA), the Comprehensive Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies. Two of the goals of GMA are to

discourage sprawl and provide parks and open space. The proposed fee-in-lieu provisions would provide the opportunity to maximize development which would contribute to a reduction of sprawl. Furthermore, the payment of a fee-in-lieu would further support GMA's goal to provide parks and open space.

The requirement for common open space within the City's development regulations is an important part of development and design, most importantly in higher density areas (R-10 & R-14). The physical outcome from this requirement results in developments that provide an opportunity for patrons to enjoy open space, in addition to the aesthetic values that naturally come with open space areas. However, providing these opportunities to patrons, in a nearby public park, achieves the same goal. Additionally, the development of local parks facilitate in the creation of neighborhood identity, which is further supported by Goal seven in the City's Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element, which states "*contribute to a strong sense of community and neighborhood identity*". The creation of public parks leaves a legacy for generations to come and preserves such open space, potentially to a greater degree than a privately owned common open space.

The Countywide Planning Policies identify that cooperation, coordination, and partnerships with private groups and individuals are necessary to development regional parks and open space systems. Countywide Planning policies also state that parks and opens spaces systems shall meet the existing needs for parks systems and should accommodate for growth. The fee-in-lieu program would add additional funds to the City's park development and acquisition fund to facilitate in adding or improving public owned parks with a direct relationship to development and growth. County Planning policies indicate that City's are the providers of local urban services. The proposed fee-in-lieu program would facilitate the City's ability to further provide such services to its citizens.

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

This amendment may increase the protection of natural resource lands and critical areas by providing an additional funding source for park land acquisition. The City not only provides active park space to its citizens, it also provides open space and natural resource lands. These areas mainly provide passive recreation opportunities to citizens and also are vital to habitat protection. Additional acquisition of such natural resource lands or open space lands to the City's park system could increase habitat corridors or "green ways" throughout the City, resulting in increased habitat protection and critical area preservation throughout the City.

Effect on other considerations

Not applicable

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that Title IV be amended to provide regulations for a fee-in-lieu program for common open space requirements and vested King County projects where tot lots are required. It is proposed that a fee-in-lieu option only be applied when development sites are located

within a 1/4 mile of a public park with safe pedestrian access to such park and is approved by the Planning Director.

It is also recommended that Title IV be amended to expand the provisions for Trail Improvements as a substitution for common open space to all areas where common open space is required, including Design Districts A, C, and D.

Implementation Requirements

Amend RMC 4-7-149