



# Non-Park Use of Park Property

(Encroachment Removal Program)



**CITY COUNCIL PARKS, SEATTLE  
CENTER, LIBRARIES AND  
WATERFRONT COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016**



# Mission



- Non-Park Use Policy (1996) – Resolution 29475
  - *As steward of public lands, the Department is responsible for preserving and protecting Seattle’s park system..., it is the policy of the Department to eliminate and prevent unauthorized non-park uses.*
  
- Strategic Action Plan-Goal 4 (2008)
  - *“...reclaim encroachments of private property on Parks and Recreation land.”*
  
- Seattle Park District (2014)
  - ❖ Investment Initiative - 1. Fix It First
    - ✦ 1.1 Fund Major Maintenance Backlog and Property Management
    - *“Preserving our land is as much a priority as preserving our buildings”*
    - *“Aggressively eliminate encroachments, requiring both removal and restoration.”*



# Brief History



- The park system has continued to expand over the past 100 years
- Over time some adjacent private property owners have placed private improvements onto park land
- In 1994 Viretta Park came to public attention as a result of a change to a driveway which crossed park property
- In 1996 new policy (Resolution 29475) and amended code (SMC 18.30) to strengthen enforcement was adopted
- In 2008, the policy was reinforced through the Strategic Action Plan
- Since 1996, there has been an on-going attempt to resolve encroachments based on complaints, discovery, property sales and Parks & Recreation projects
- In 2014 the Seattle Park District was created after the passage of Proposition 1 and funds encroachment removal

# Past vs Future



## Past

- Staff has been dedicated to expansion, development and on-going permitting
- Primarily react to reported encroachment activity
- Difficult to maintain with consistent focus

## Now

- Park District funded a staff dedicated to encroachment resolution and electronic data management
- Implementing procedures consistent with SMC 18.30 and Non-Park Use policy (Resolution 29475)
- Focus is on contiguous stretches of park land, while still addressing encroachments identified through other means

## Why is this Important?



- Seattle's park land is land held in trust for all the people of Seattle
- Encroachments deny the public use of park space
- Non-Park Use of park property is illegal
- Encroachments often destroy natural habitat
- Even small encroachments take away park land (death by a thousand cuts)
- Private improvements may increase public liability
- The encroachments create a private benefit not available to others in the City
- As City grows, park spaces and natural areas become more precious

# What is a Park?

## More than just Recreation

- Recreation – Playgrounds, sports fields, pools, manicured park land
- Boulevards – Magnolia, Queen Anne, Lake Washington, et al
- Habitat Protection – Green spaces and natural areas





# Hitt's Hill Park: Aerial View



# Alder Creek area of Washington Park





# Lake Washington Boulevard





# Magnolia Boulevard



Appears to be extension  
of private property

# Magnolia Boulevard



Excess Paving  
Increases impervious surface  
Reduces green swath



# Results & Next Steps

## Past Successes

- Viretta Park
- Seward Park
- Volunteer Park



## Where are We Headed

- Washington Park Arboretum – backyards along 26<sup>th</sup> Ave E (in progress)
- Hitt's Hill Park – south boundary (in progress)
- Schmitz Preserve Park
- Burke-Gilman Trail
- Queen Anne Boulevard – previous area of focus



# Moving Forward



- Public support is strong for reclaiming park land
- Most property owners are cooperative and understanding, but some will seek Council, Mayor's Office intervention
- Two sides to issue
  - Why me?
  - Why not my park?

