

# 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.

#### <u>Strategic Action Plan-Goal 4 (2008)</u>

• "...reclaim encroachments of private property on Parks and Recreation land."

#### <u>Seattle Park District (2014)</u>

- <u>Investment Initiative 1. Fix It First</u>
  - × <u>1.1 Fund Major Maintenance Backlog and Property Management</u>
- *"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

#### Now

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

- 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?

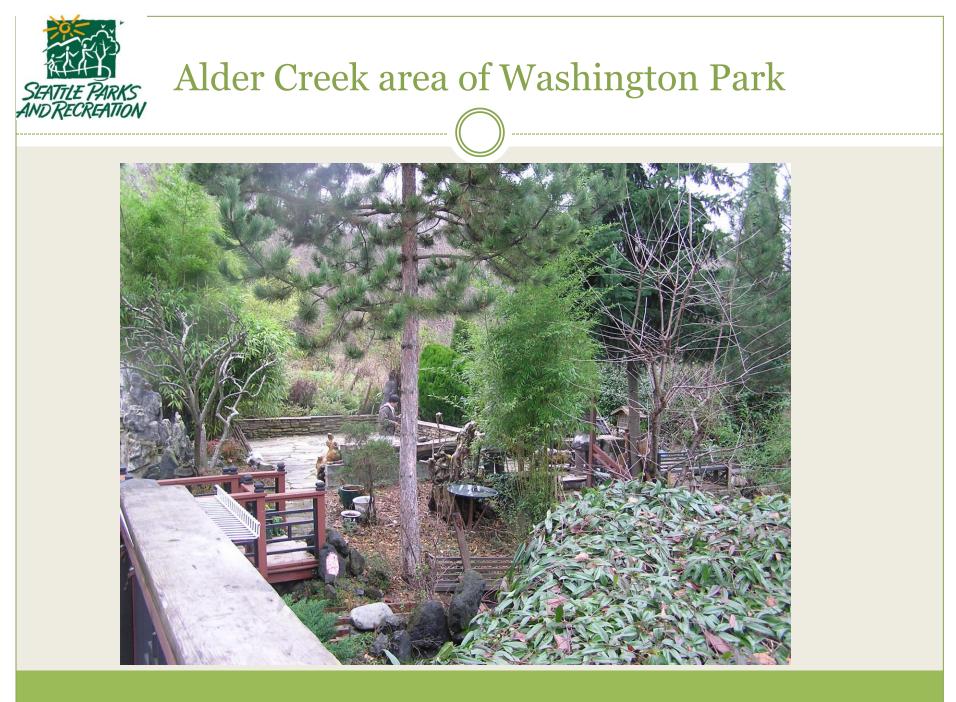
#### More than just Recreation

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











### Lake Washington Boulevard



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Hedge encloses and privatizes park property



### 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?

