

## **OPEN SPACE COMMISSION (OSC) Operating Plan**

### **Summary**

On November 6, 2001, almost 70 percent of Bainbridge Island voters approved the issuance of \$8 million in general obligation bonds to pay the costs of “acquiring or otherwise preserving forested areas, open space, wildlife habitat, farms and agricultural lands and creating new trails and passive parks....” (“Passive parks” do not include space for organized sports, such as baseball or tennis.) In December 2001, the City Council approved seven Bainbridge Island citizens to serve on an Open Space Commission (OSC) to help the City government carry out this mandate.

To that end, the Open Space Commission will (1) create a process for identifying and evaluating properties for acquisition or preservation; (2) develop a list of properties for consideration, with a preference for a variety of kinds and locations of properties; (3) explore the best methods of acquiring or otherwise preserving individual properties, including the potential for leveraging funds; (4) select individual properties to recommend to City Council for acquisition or other protective actions; (5) develop and recommend actions to ensure appropriate maintenance and stewardship of open space properties; (6) seek to complete initial property purchases and protective actions within three years; and (7) make recommendations to City Council for further actions to preserve open space on Bainbridge Island if additional funds become available. In its recommendations to City Council for preservation or acquisition, the Commission will strive to achieve a mix of different kinds and locations of properties, subject to the availability of such properties at a reasonable price.

This Operating Plan details how the Open Space Commission (OSC) will function.

#### **A. Develop list(s) and map(s) of existing open space.**

1. Develop list(s) and map(s) that identify dedicated open space, undeveloped property, properties volunteered for consideration by the OSC, and properties requiring confidential treatment.
2. Coordinate list(s) of properties with existing, publicly available maps that identify areas of public interest or concern.

#### **B. Develop criteria for screening and reviewing parcels.**

#### **C. Establish process for public involvement in and public education about OSC goals, plans and activities.**

1. Seek public comment about goals, operating plan, and criteria for selection of open space properties through open meetings, news media, electronic communications, outreach to existing community organizations, etc.
2. Seek public comment on list(s) and map(s) of dedicated open space and properties volunteered for consideration that do not require confidential treatment (e.g., properties that have an option for purchase).

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3. Publicize that each OSC meeting will open with request for public comment about areas that need further study or emphasis (e.g., a group or neighborhood organization that wanted to promote particular project, such as trail system or group conservation easement).
4. Establish a web site that includes public map(s) and list(s) of existing dedicated open space and properties that do not require confidential treatment, as well as ongoing projects; include a mechanism through which the public can make suggestions or offer comments.
5. Establish process for soliciting submission of properties to be considered by OSC (e.g., stories in news media, notices on City web site, etc.) This process could include seeking public involvement in identifying properties that meet OSC criteria and may be available for OSC consideration
6. Promote public awareness of OSC's activities by developing a special sign to be posted on properties where OSC has taken action or where action is pending. Such a sign could have a recognizable logo and perhaps a small map or legend showing the result of OSC action.

**C. Establish process for public submission of properties and review of recommendations**

1. Designate primary contact person (e.g., city employee, OSC member)
2. Develop list of suggested materials to include with submission:
  - a. Description of property and definition of what is for sale (e.g., fee simple sale, conservation easement, trail easement);
  - b. Pictures of property, boundaries and special features;
  - c. Topographic maps, survey maps, zoning maps;
  - d. Seller's proposed price;
  - e. Seller's reasons why property should be considered;
  - f. Neighborhood support information;
  - g. Sales comparables of similar properties;
  - h. If wetlands or critical area, any professional reports or surveys that may outline the critical area;
  - i. Tax parcel number.
3. Establish privacy policy to be handed out on request, guaranteeing best efforts at keeping submission confidential.
4. Develop policy for treatment of third parties (e.g., brokers, attorneys) that specifies that the OSC is to be treated like any other buyer with respect to fees, and that the OSC may designate an individual or organization to handle negotiations on a listed property.
5. In the case of multiple but related submissions, encourage identification of one primary contact who will initially deal with all parties.

**E. Develop process for reviewing and making recommendations on properties.**

1. Follow procedures for submission of property and information about property outlined in Section D.1. and D.2. (above).
2. Determine whether a property requires normal or expedited review, decision, and/or response.
3. Review subject property to determine if property has merit.

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4. Identify and implement appropriate action to protect open space on property based on public value of property and need for expedited response. Action may be property purchase or other protective action, including putting property under a conservation or trail easement; purchase of development rights; purchase of the property and resale of a portion of the property; purchase and lease-back of the property, etc.
5. Make recommendation(s) on selected properties to City Council for purchase or other protective action to preserve open space.

**F. Develop policies/procedures/standards for long-term ownership and stewardship/maintenance of properties.**

1. Every property purchased or preserved by the City of Bainbridge Island with funds from the Open Space levy will have a written stewardship plan.
2. The plan for each property will be written specifically for that property and may include, but not be limited to, information about public access, maintenance of the property, the agency or organization responsible for stewardship, and/or resources to implement the stewardship plan.
3. The City will actively seek partnerships with other government agencies and other organizations for help in monitoring and providing stewardship of property protected with funds from the Open Space levy.

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