Wapato Park is one of Tacoma’s signature parks and will continue to be a focal point, of not only the South Tacoma Neighborhood but also the surrounding region as a vital urban park and green space. Developed over the years as a family oriented “resort” style park, Wapato Park will continue to be a destination for those seeking a high quality leisure experience in a close to home natural setting.

The Master Plan provides a long-range view for uses and activities that might best occur at Wapato Park. The following proposals take into consideration the historical context of the site, the diversity of uses from the past and present, and the relationship of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The Master Plan carefully balances the historic qualities of the park with the current and future needs of the community with a central goal of serving as a guide for future development and improvements to the park. Key components of the Master Plan include:

- Bathhouse Renovations
- Lake Enhancements
- Sculptured Garden
- Playground / Sprayground
- Off-Leash Dog Area
- Reserved Picnic Areas
- Trails
- Roadway & Walk Enhancements
- 72nd Street Café & Parking Area
- Utility Upgrades
- Site Furnishings
**Improvement Projects**

The following is a detailed description of the plan’s specific recommendations.

**Bathhouse Renovations**-

The Bathhouse is the architectural focal point of the park and will be renovated and upgraded to serve as an activity center and focal point of the park. This facility provides revenue generating potential from food concessions, boat rentals, and catering event rentals while improving public access to the docks and year-a-round restroom facilities.

*Features of the Bathhouse*

- Redesigned restrooms with new outer doors on the north end of the building will allow for more convenient year-round access by park visitors.

*Figure 4 Bathhouse Elevations*
• The interior is designed to accommodate a concessionaire to provide sandwich and beverage service. Seating is provided on the lower level with direct access to the deck extending out over the lake.

Figure 5 Bathhouse First Floor Plans

Figure 6 Bathhouse Second Floor Plans

• The upper level provides additional seating on a daily basis but offers the opportunity for hosting catered events. Remaining as an open-air facility, utilities, tables, and other accommodations to support catered events are provided.
- The deck at the rear of the building is expanded with the removal of the former boat storage shed destroyed by fire in early 2005. The expansion allows a better connection to the buildings interior creating a brighter more open feeling while serving as spill over space for activity inside. The expanded deck also provides roomier public access to the water, the boat rentals, and access for fishing.

- New walkways from the main parking area will create a more formal approach to this historic building and provide a framework for an outdoor concert venue on the sloped and tree covered grass area.
Lake Enhancements-
To improve water quality of the lake sediments entering the lake must be reduced and the levels of dissolved oxygen must be increased. To accomplish this the Master Plan proposes the following:

- Installation of an aerating fountain and bubblers throughout the lake.
- Reconstruction, as needed, and maintenance of the sediment trap system at the Ainsworth Avenue outfall.
- Establishment of a vegetative edge along the north and west sides of the lake to control soil erosion, introduction of rooted aquatic vegetation to increase nutrient removal, and addition of taller wetland plants for increasing shade along the water’s edge.
- Installation of docks and platforms at the water’s edge to control access and reduce erosion of the shoreline.
- Installation of rock outcroppings at strategic locations around the lake to provide additional locations for public access, armoring of the shoreline, and protection for planting of sedges and other rooted aquatic vegetation.
- Increasing the amount of water entering the lake to provide water movement and exchange. Because of limited natural flow of ground water, pumping in fresh water from the Green River conduit at the north end of the lake, as was developed from the 1983 study by ENTRANCO, may be necessary. The system of valves and distribution pipes would need to be inspected and repaired as necessary but discussions with the City and Tacoma Public Utilities to provide this resource should be put forward.

Additional administrative management strategies should be implemented to improve water quality of the lake including:
Control of the waterfowl population with a first step of adopting enforceable measures to stop the public from feeding the ducks and geese.

Work with the State of Washington Depart of Ecology and the City of Tacoma Environmental Services to develop a lake management plan. A first step in this process is the development of a base-line water quality measurement program.

**Sculptured Garden-**

Serving as the front-yard of the park the street frontage along 72nd Street provides one of the largest open lawn-areas within the park and open views to the lake. This area presents a great opportunity to design a feature that will serve as a focal point for the park, making use of the connection between land and water, and provide a spacious area for recreational use. The master plan proposes the development of a “sculptured garden” created by landforms and climbing boulders. The form of this garden plays off the fountain jet located at the south end of the lake by mimicking with earthen berms the shape of the concentric waves emanating from the fountain center. These waveforms extend the water pattern on-shore where they break against the large stone boulders.

The boulders are large custom designed artificial rocks made specifically to provide a challenging rock climbing experience. These boulders provide a play element for older children and adults while adding a needed attraction to this end of the park. The lawn area will be an attraction for sunbathing, picnicking, group gatherings, or just a place to relax and enjoy the view the fountain and lake beyond.

**Playground / Sprayground-**

The existing playground consists of two climbing units designed for school age children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old. In addition a swing set with both belt and tot-style swings is within the large wood mulched play area. This play area is surrounded by a concrete curb and accessed from the loop walkway. A number of large Douglas Fir trees are located within and around the area and picnic tables are conveniently located to provide
places for seating and family picnics.

The plan expands the playground to accommodate a broader range of children and increase the playability of the area consistent with the concept of a community park. To accomplish this a new play structure will be added that focuses on the needs of pre-school age children. In addition, in the open sunny area to the south of the existing play area a new sprayground facility is added offering water play during the summer season. The sprayground will be designed to incorporate connecting walks to the loop path to provide park users of all ages the opportunity to enjoy the mists and water-jets as part of their strolling experience.

Between the two play areas a connecting plaza provides hard surface play amenities, additional seating, and picnic tables. Across the loop walkway the beach area has been relocated from the south side of the Bathhouse. This feature will serve as an additional play feature and convenient access to the water’s edge.

Off-Leash Dog Area-

For years Wapato Park has informally been used as an off-leash dog park. Through the community meetings strong support was voiced for development of a dedicated space for this activity. Nace Field, located at the north end of the park, is a large open field area originally developed for a baseball field in 1971. After accommodating setbacks from the adjacent wetlands, a 2.2-acre area is provided for canine use.

Installation of a drainage field and additional fill will be necessary to deal with the wet soil conditions.

Features of the off-leash area include a double gate entry, graveled gathering area to minimize surface wear, 4’ perimeter fence, scoop-bag dispensers, and water facilities. Additional supporting infrastructure includes improved parking facilities and access walks.

Reserved Picnic Areas-

Many families come to Wapato Park for picnics and special gatherings. The current park provides two shelters. Because the shelters are in close prox-
Imity to one another a lack of adequate parking limits only one of the shelters can be used as a rentable facility. The other is available on a first come basis. The plan provides three reservable group picnic areas spread out across the park, (a fourth shelter is available to serve the public on a first come basis). Each of the reserved areas is located within easy access to separate parking areas and offer a package of amenities to support family and group outings.

A brief descriptions of these three areas are as follows;

**Main Picnic Area** – Constructed in 1936 by the WPA this stone and timber structure provides a historical reminder of the parks past. Located just off the north end of the lake this area provides easy access to the playground and beach improvements, and the loop walkway encircling the lake. Additional amenities include sand volleyball courts and horseshoe pits. The shelter is equipped with running water, portable picnic tables, and adjacent grills for cooking. Parking is provided from a new lot at the former Rotary picnic area adjacent to the park’s entry.

**Central Picnic Area** – Located in the open meadow area immediately west of the main parking lot this new facility provides a private retreat within the park. From the adjacent parking lot a walkway aligned with the Bathhouse access leads to a new shelter nestled in the existing forest. The architectural style respects that of the main picnic shelter and the Bathhouse, both constructed in the 1930’s. Available amenities include a new restroom facility, picnic tables and grills, horseshoe pits, grass volleyball court, and an open-field play area.

**South Picnic Area** – In the southeast corner this picnic area offers great views up the lake. The picnic shelter is complimented with picnicking facilities, access to the basketball courts, horseshoe pits, and a sand volleyball court. Parking is provided from the redesigned parking lot off 72nd Street. Restrooms are available at both the Bathhouse and the 72nd Street facility adjacent to the Sculptured Garden.
Trails-
The existing loop walk around the lake is enhanced with the addition of shelters, sitting areas, and observation decks dispersed along the waters edge. In addition a new walkway is proposed for the water’s edge from the Bathhouse to the Sculptured Garden providing enhanced water access and additional reinforcement of the shoreline. At points around both the upper and lower lakes walkers can access new decks out over the water for fishing, bird watching, or just enjoying the views up and down the lake. These docks also provide opportunities to incorporate interpretive signage to educate the park user about the lake environment, wildlife, and the park.

The existing network of trails through the park’s woods is enhanced into a system of looped trails that provide access to a variety of habitats within the park. The existing narrow dirt trails are upgraded to provide a firm walking surface and vegetation is cut back to improve the feeling of safety for the park user while providing access to the northern part of the park. As a part of this new trail system boardwalks are proposed to provide access into the more sensitive wetland areas and provide an opportunity for hikers to experience the upper lake edges of cattail and marsh grasses.

At the corner of 72nd Street and Sheridan Avenue a new pedestrian entry has been created. This feature takes advantage of the mature stand of firs and under story plantings to create the Rhododendron Garden trail into the park. A small shelter is provided as an entry feature to the park.

Roadway & Walk Enhancements-
A number of improvements are proposed to better accommodate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The following is a brief summary of each of these improvements:

Closing off Wapato Lake Drive: In the 1980’s, primarily in response to problems with vehicular cruising through the park, a section of Wapato
Lake Drive was closed between the residential neighborhood to the north and the Main Picnic Area. Further development created a parking lot at the end of this now dead-end street which has become a popular location for loitering and numerous reported illicit activities. Because of its proximity to the loop walk around the lake and the desire to create more family attractive park amenities the parking lot is being converted to recreational sport use and the road will become part of the pedestrian trail system.

**Creating new parking lots:** An often-heard comment during the public meetings is the need to provide additional parking. This is particularly an issue relative to the reservable picnic areas that limits Metro Park’s ability to rent out more than one shelter at a time. The park currently contains 135 parking spaces but with the new plan that redesigns some existing areas and adds new lots the total number of spaces is increased to 215. The two greatest changes are redesign of the lot off 72nd Street that increases parking from 43 to 87 spaces; and conversion of the Kiwanis picnic area into a 50 car parking lot. The latter will also be the main support for the proposed off-leash area to be located just to the north. These reconfigurations also spread out the parking so that more is available to serve all three of the proposed sheltered picnic areas.

**Paving the rest of the lake loop:** In 1996 a 10’ wide concrete walkway was installed around much of the lake to provide a smooth surface for walkers and joggers. However, because privately owned houses occupied a stretch of lakefront in the southwest corner, a section of this trail remains gravel. The plan calls for completing the paved surface treatment through this last section of the loop walk.

**Creating an observation area at SW corner:** With the opportunity created with the removal of the houses that bordered the lake, the plan proposes realigning this walk up on the tier overlooking the lake. This will create an opportunity to develop a new sheltered overlook as a rest stop for strollers. This new feature will include an area with a gazebo, benches and picnic tables, and native landscape gardens overlooking the proposed fountain and Bathhouse beyond.

**Stone Columns Gateways:** Stone columns, similar to the WPA stone entry features will be constructed at all entry points into the park. The
Current columns at the Sheridan Street and 72nd Street entries will be rebuilt and enlarged to more appropriately relate to the scale of the vehicular entrances into the park. The existing columns at the Cushman Avenue entry will be relocated to the corner of Sheridan and 72nd Street and replicated at the three other primary pedestrian entries at Wapato Lake Drive, northwest corner at Alaska Street, and the intersection of Alaska Avenue and 72nd Street.

**Pedestrian crossing at Sheridan:** The plan recommends street crossing improvements on Sheridan Street at the main pedestrian entries to the park. The City of Tacoma Public Works proposes to install a formalized crosswalk with wide painted striping, approach signage and pedestrian activated flashers. This system has been successfully implemented in other locations within the City and is being recommended as one method to improve pedestrian crossings.

**New sidewalk along Alaska:** Currently there are no sidewalks along Alaska Street between South 58th Street and South 72nd Street. The City has completed reconstruction of the entire street including sidewalks on Alaska from 38th Street to 56th Street and will extend these to 72nd Street in the future. As a part of this proposed work a new sidewalk will be incorporated and Metro Parks will work to have this built along the parkside of the street so as to improve access to the park and provide a buffer from the traffic.

**New lake front walkway:** A new esplanade walkway is proposed for the area extending from the Bathhouse south to the Sculptured Garden. This new walkway creates a new loop walkway at the south end of the lake while providing the opportunity for park users to get close to the water’s edge without causing erosion. New seating areas will be provided along this walkway offering strollers a place to sit and relax and enjoy the views of the lake and the new fountain.

**72nd Street Café and Parking Area**:
The plan provides an opportunity for the development of a café/restaurant to offer a finer level of food service with a lakeside atmosphere. While serving as the front door to the park and with direct access to 72nd Street, this area is redesigned to both open up the view to the lake, provide needed additional parking, and offer a new park amenity of a privately operated café at the
The cafe would provide an opportunity to draw more visitors to the park, which in turn increases the level of safety and security.

Designed in the 1970’s the existing circle parking lots are an inefficient use of space. Their current layout extends far out into the open space between the lake and 72nd Street. With a parking lot redesign that shifts it further to the east an opportunity is created to open views to the lake. This allows the park to connect visually to the neighborhood while at the same time nearly doubling the number of parking spaces. Included in this redesign is a new landscaped entry providing more direct access to the South Sector Police Substation, new picnic areas, and other areas within the park.

Utility Upgrades-
Following is a brief summary of the proposed upgrades that will be required for the park to continue providing a quality level of service to the community and to meet the demands of new features and amenities:

**Water service** – In order to meet future needs and to comply with city requirements the following recommendations are proposed:
1. Install a new 8” main from Sheridan Avenue to a new fire hydrant at the Bathhouse.
2. Replace the 2” galvanized service line with new copper service.
3. With construction of the Police Substation abandon the 4” transite pipe and corresponding isolation valves between the Bathhouse and 72nd Street.

**Electrical** – In order to provide a consistent level of power throughout the park the following recommendations are proposed
1. Install in conduit a new main primary with 150KVA to the Bathhouse
2. Provide single-phase extension to pad mounted transformers throughout the park.
3. Provide service outlets at all picnic shelters – 50amp 240/120 construction outlets with two 20amp breakers
4. Provide dedicated service for meeting needs for the lake fountain and bubbler system
5. Install a new service line from Alaska Avenue to service the gazebo and lighting needs on the west side of the lake.

**Sanitary sewer** – No major upgrades are anticipated at this time. To capture the water from the Pergola pool, future drinking fountain at the playground,
and to reactivate the sink in the Main Picnic Shelter, a pump will be installed to direct this drainage water to the existing sanitary. Connections to future picnic shelters, drinking fountains, and restrooms will be tied directly to the main sewer line.

**Storm Drainage** – Wapato Lake is one of the major retention / detention basins for the City’s storm water drainage system. Future construction and site upgrades will conform to the City’s Environmental Services Stormwater Division regulations and guidelines. One option to explore will be utilization of bio-swales that direct runoff from walks and roof areas to landscaped areas to filter sediments prior to entering the system. This will also include re-establishment of the filtration system from the Ainsworth Avenue outfall to trap sediments prior to entering the lake.

**Irrigation** – General upgrades are needed for the entire system in order to simplify maintenance and operation of the system. Proposed improvements include:

1. Adding coverage to the Main and proposed South Picnic Areas.
2. Replacing all the heads with a single brand of fixture to improve efficiency and ease of maintenance.
3. Because of uneven coverage redesign the zone covering the Rhododendron Garden.
4. Replace the lateral lines in the Sculptured Garden area that are buried too deep for improving the ease of on-going maintenance.

**Site Furnishing**-

For the Master Plan a suite of furnishings has been selected to help visually unify the park. The materials and finishes have been chosen to reflect the natural character of the park and for their ease of maintenance.

**Guidelines for the placement and selection of the site furnishings:**

- Lighting to be consistent with other installations throughout the park system comprising of 100 watt high pressure sodium (HPS) lamps on direct burial concrete aggregate poles. Luminaires shall be a downlight bell design with crook-neck mounting to mimic original style of lighting within the park.
Poles equal to Victorian Style I as manufactured by Ameron International
Luminaires and mounting bracket equal to UCM Series as manufactured by Architectural Area Lighting

- Benches are to be 3"x8" and 3"x4" Douglas Fir mounted on 3" square steel tube embedded. Placement shall be along walkways and at activity areas. Distribution should be throughout the park in order to provide park users a variety of options for sitting and relaxing.

  Recommended models should be equal to;
  - Dumor Bench 38

- Trash Receptacles – matching the benches these units are vertical slat round receptacles with removable liner. Placement should near high traffic areas with equal distribution around the park.

  Recommended models should be equal to;
  - Fair Weather Site Furnishings TR-1

- Picnic Tables – Two varieties are recommended. One style is a permanent fixture for general park use. This is a 4’x4’ permanent mount pedestal table with attached bench seats. Tops and seats shall be 2”x10” Douglas Fir planking. The second style is a traditional portable table to accommodate the needs of groups utilizing the picnic shelters. This model shall be a 6’ long recycled plastic top and seats mounted on 2-3/8” galvanized frames

  Recommended models should be equal to;
  - Iron Mountain Forge #264-4XR
  - Iron Mountain Forge #238-6GA
Drinking Fountains- Drinking fountains should be placed near picnic areas and near activity areas such as the playground and Sculptured Garden. Two models are proposed - freestanding and wall mounted.

Recommended models should be equal to:
- Haws Model #3500 FR
- Haws Model 1035FR