



Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance Board of Directors Endorsement of Kirkland Proposition 2, Funding Park Maintenance and Enhancements

The Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance board of directors recommends a “yes” vote in the November general election on Kirkland Proposition 2, which establishes a levy for the maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of Kirkland’s parks.

The FHNA board believes that Proposition 2 is essential to preserving Kirkland’s quality of life, which is tied directly to its parks. Kirkland’s parks are the city’s treasures. We need to protect them and enhance them, not just for our current enjoyment but also for the benefit of future generations.

Proposition 2 is particularly beneficial to Finn Hill residents. It has two features that -- in the words of the FHNA bylaws – will “preserve, protect, and restore [Finn Hill’s] natural environment.”

First, Proposition 2 will replace the **O.O. Denny Park maintenance** levy that we currently pay (and that we would need to renew in 2014), ensuring a permanent source of maintenance funding and thereby preserving its future as a public park.

Second, the park levy provides funding for **future park acquisitions** – something that Kirkland recognizes the eastern portion of Finn Hill needs. The opportunity to acquire parklands should be seized now, before land values begin to increase and before desirable open space is lost forever.

The levy will have minimal impact on Finn Hill property taxes, which have dropped significantly since annexation. The levy is larger than the current assessment we pay for O.O Denny Park. However, the net increase (\$0.10 per \$1000 of assessed valuation) represents only 5% of the property tax *reduction* that Finn Hill residents have realized since annexation (\$1.96 per \$1000 of assessed valuation). Even after factoring in other fees associated with living in Kirkland, the park levy would not result in an increase in taxes for Finn Hill homeowners over what they paid as King County residents.

Given the substantial benefits it will bring to Kirkland generally and to Finn Hill in particular, the FHNA board of directors strongly endorses Kirkland Proposition 2.

General Background: Proposition 2 establishes a levy to provide a stable source of revenues that must, by law, be used solely to provide funding for “park maintenance and beach lifeguards, to restore, maintain, and enhance docks, park facilities, trails, and playfields, and to acquire parkland and open space.”

This levy is needed because city revenues have fallen significantly due to the recent economic downturn, while municipal costs (such as health care and utilities) have continued to rise. The city has maintained its support for essential police and fire services, but it has had to do so by limiting park resources. Park maintenance staff hours have been cut by 20% and capital improvements funds for parks have fallen by 38%, even as park acreage has increased 10% following annexation.

The need for well-maintained parks and for open space will intensify as Kirkland continues to grow: the city’s population is expected to increase by 25% in the next two decades.

The levy will allow Kirkland’s park program to recover its footing. A listing of the specific maintenance and capital improvements projects that the levy will support, and the amounts allocated to each, appear in a [fact sheet](#) prepared by the City of Kirkland. The principal benefits of the levy include:

- *Restoration of park maintenance* to former standards for cleaner, more attractive parks (e.g., better grounds maintenance, restroom cleaning, garbage pickup)
- *Permanent funding for lifeguards* at park beaches
- *Expansion of the innovative Green Kirkland program*, which uses volunteers to remove invasive shrubs from parks and to plant new trees (20,000 trees planted by volunteers so far)
- *Replacement of aging park facilities and features* (docks, shorelines, Juanita Beach restroom building)
- *Development of the Cross-Kirkland Trail* connecting Totem Lake with the State Route 520 Park-and-Ride along the old BNSF railroad line
- *Enhancements to school playfields* for community use after class
- *Creation of a fund for the acquisition of parks* in underserved areas such as east Finn Hill

The levy will raise \$2.35 million per year. Homeowners will be assessed 16 cents per \$1000 of assessed valuation. For a home worth \$346,000 – the median value in Kirkland – the levy will cost \$55.36 per year, or less than \$5 per month.

The city will publish an annual report on the use of levy funds, and park projects will be reviewed by the Parks Board.

Finn Hill Perspectives: This levy is particularly important to Finn Hill for two reasons:

- **O.O. Denny Park** – Finn Hill residents currently pay a property tax assessment to the Finn Hill Park & Recreation District (FHPRD) to cover the cost of maintaining O.O. Denny Park. This assessment is due to expire in 2014. Without Proposition 2, Finn Hill voters would be required to decide next year whether to renew the FHPRD assessment. If they didn’t renew the assessment, funding to maintain O.O. Denny Park would cease and the park would be closed. In that event, ownership of the land would revert to the Seattle Children’s Home Society, which has said that it would sell the parkland to developers in order to fund its principal charitable missions.

Proposition 2 will provide permanent maintenance funding for O.O. Denny Park, securing the park's future *and* eliminating the current FHPRD assessment on Finn Hill residents. Because the current FHPRD tax is 6 cents per \$1000 assessed valuation, passage of Proposition 2 would represent a net increase for Finn Hill residents of only 10 cents per \$1000 – roughly \$35 per year for the owner of a median value home, or less than \$3 per month.

- **Future Park Acquisitions:** The additional 10 cent cost for Finn Hill residents will fund maintenance and improvements to parks that we use throughout Kirkland – a general benefit to us as Kirkland residents. It will also provide money for park acquisitions principally in neighborhoods that do not have adequate access to parks. The city has already identified the eastern portion of Finn Hill as lacking adequate park lands, and there are still attractive sites that the city could acquire in this area if it had the funds to do so. This levy represents our last chance to protect key parcels of undeveloped property on Finn Hill. The opportunity to preserve an appealing balance of residential development with parks and woodlands on eastern Finn Hill is immense, but fleeting. We should not let it slip away.

Finally, passage of the levy will not result in Finn Hill residents' paying more property tax than they did before annexation. Since we became a part of Kirkland, we have seen our property tax rate drop by \$1.96 per \$1000 – that's more than \$678 for the owner of a median value home. Kirkland's utility franchise fee and higher surface water management fee offset that reduction partially. So would the park levy, but not significantly. The overall tax bill for a Finn Hill homeowner would still remain less than what it was prior to annexation.

Conclusion: Given the minimal impact of the park levy on Finn Hill property taxes, and the substantial benefits it will bring to Kirkland generally and to Finn Hill in particular, the FHNA board of directors strongly recommends a "yes" vote on Kirkland Proposition 2.