



July 19, 2015

Kirkland City Council  
Kirkland City Hall  
123 Fifth Avenue  
Kirkland WA 98033

### Capital Improvement Plan 2015-2020

Dear City Council Members:

The Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance (FHNA) board has reviewed the preliminary Capital Improvement Plan you will be discussing at your study session on Tuesday, July 21st. We are encouraged by the proposal's thoughtful approach to addressing Kirkland's capital needs on a citywide basis. We are also very supportive of the many transportation, surface water, and public safety improvements identified for the Finn Hill neighborhood.

We are concerned, however, that two important projects listed in the plan are either unfunded or inadequately funded. We write to urge that you make every effort to fund these projects.

#### Juanita Heights Park Expansion

We were pleased to see the addition of a parks project to expand Juanita Heights Park (PK 0135 100), but are extremely disappointed it is not listed on the funded project list. FHNA has worked very hard as with parks staff to build support, identify funding opportunities, and negotiate with land owners to expand the park and preserve the forested hillside above Juanita. FHNA and the City were recently informed by King County's Conservation Futures Trust Fund evaluation team that it would recommend a \$150,000 grant for land acquisition to expand Juanita Heights Park. A commitment of City funds to complement this recommendation will not only increase the likelihood that this grant will be approved by the County but will also enhance our opportunity to secure additional Conservation Futures Trust Fund grants in the future. Conversely, the City's failure to assign any funding to Juanita Height Park expansion would undermine FHNA's efforts to convince property owners that money is available to purchase their parcels for open space and would weaken our ability to attract funding from other sources in the near future.

As the market for new home construction has improved, the woodlands around Juanita Heights Park are under imminent threat of development. Now is the time to include the expansion of Juanita Heights

Park as a **funded** project in the City's 6-year CIP. Juanita Heights Park and the contiguous undeveloped land is a unique oasis of native vegetation. The health of the forest in this area is superb, with only minor disruption by invasive plant species. Every year more and more studies appear about the benefits of open green areas to human health and a vibrant community. Expansion of the park would provide multiple benefits including minimizing landslide risks, maintaining a visually appealing green hillside over Juanita Village, and enhancing neighborhood connectivity by the creation of a public footpath connecting Juanita Beach Park to the top of Finn Hill. The proposed expansion would also provide the keystone for a long term program to maintain and connect green space along the eastern flank of Finn Hill to Simonds Road in the north. The resulting park and trail system would be a significant municipal asset.

We have discussed this project with most members of City Council, and you have indicated your support for the park expansion and preservation of the additional open space. We ask that the CIP reflect your support and commitment, and include the Juanita Heights Park Expansion project on the **funded** list.

#### **Juanita Drive Improvements**

We look forward to the completion of the Juanita Drive "quick wins" project (NM 0090) that implements new lighting, pedestrian crossings, and bicycle lanes along the corridor for a total cost of \$1.35 million. As you know, this project is funded with outside grant dollars, representing 95% of the total cost. Another project has been added to the CIP called the Juanita Drive Multi-Modal (On-Street) Improvements (NM 0112 000) for \$500,000 in 2020.

While these projects are important, they are essentially the "low-hanging" fruit, and address only a few of the critical safety needs along the corridor. To put it more in perspective, the Juanita Drive Corridor Study estimated the total needs along the corridor at \$19 to \$25 million, but the CIP commits just shy of 10% of the funding for the study recommendations. We therefore are deeply concerned the CIP does not demonstrate the City's overall commitment to implementing the recommendations in the recently adopted Juanita Drive Corridor Study.

We ask you to support the following regarding Juanita Drive and modify the CIP accordingly:

**1. Fund additional Juanita Drive projects in the CIP.** Since projects along the corridor are very good grant eligible projects, the projects should be added to the funded list, with external sources making up a large portion of the funding strategy and thereby minimizing City revenue contributions. This would demonstrate the City's commitment to aggressively pursuing outside grant dollars. The "quick wins" was only the first step. Due to the documented safety issues along Juanita Drive, any improvement would compete very well on a regional and statewide basis for outside funding.

**2. Include all the project recommendations from the Juanita Drive Corridor Study into the CIP.** We were surprised that the CIP did not identify the \$20 million of recommended projects in the Corridor Study anywhere in the lengthy document, even on the unfunded list. At a very minimum, the projects identified in the Corridor Study must be integrated into the CIP.

Thank you for considering these requests. We look forward to working with the City on implementing these important projects. Please email me or call me at (206) 972-9493 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Scott Morris  
President

cc: Kurt Triplett  
Jenny Schroder  
Kathy Brown  
FHNA Board of Directors