

# TOTEM LAKE PARK PUBLIC ART PROJECT

## Project Approach

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Totem Lake Park Master Plan – currently under design and will evolve as final environmental and other conditions are fully understood. Design at 30% currently.

### APPROACH

Totem Lake Park presents the opportunity for an artist to work in a limited collaboration with the park designers, Berger Partnership, to develop artwork(s) that underlay and complement the collective potential experiences that people will have within the park.

Since Totem Lake is the only park in this area of Kirkland, it is important to take full advantage of the uniqueness of the lake as a place of respite standing in stark contrast to the surrounding built and infrastructure environment. Additionally it is the primary opportunity in this area to bring people to a place defined by a noteworthy natural ecosystem. In doing so, the park will contribute to the well-being of those that live and work in this rapidly developing, dense neighborhood.

The approach to the Totem Lake Park's artwork opportunity was developed after conversations with key City personnel and the designers. Since this park is singular within this part of Kirkland, it seemed important to use an artist's creative approach to reveal elements of nature in general and specifically to this lake's natural ecosystem in ways that draw people deeply into the site during the varying lengths of time they spend at the lake.

The park will be used in a number of different ways – such as:

- A quick commute through on bike.

- Walkers going from point A to B, but also to use the loop for that respite potential, as well as exercise.

- Birdwatching.

- Playing in the gathering area, etc.

Thus it will be important for the artist to understand this range and in general, the way parks are typically used and experienced.

The artwork should provide one or more unique experiences that lodge in people's momentary, as well as lingering memories of the lake environment. In conversation with the designers and the City, the artist can determine whether it is more powerful to concentrate one unique experience within the park or frame a set of linked experiences that occur in a chosen location or throughout the park.

That said, the preferred artist for this project should be able to articulate a deep interest in natural environments and ecosystems, as well as demonstrate through past artwork how they have previously connected to natural places. Interested artists should further articulate how they perceive this specific opportunity to build experiential bridges to Totem Lake's environment and uses, and what experiences they are interested in exploring and subsequently achieving.

## Language For Use in the RFQ

### DESCRIPTION

The City of Kirkland seeks an artist or artist team to develop artwork for the new Totem Lake Park. The artist(s) will have the opportunity to work closely with the park design team, Berger Partnership in Seattle.

The goals for the environmentally sensitive artwork are to develop concepts that can be integrated into the park that:

- Intentionally deepen, broaden and/or illuminate one's experiences while using this singular natural zone sitting within a highly developed area of exurban Kirkland
- Enhance the capacity to provide "meaningful respite" from urban life
- Connect people to natural rhythms and potentially seasons
- Offer consistently varying sensory experiences for users
- Work within the overall design and design team to draw people into experiencing the whole park

### BACKGROUND

Totem Lake Park is an underutilized asset at the heart of the Totem Lake neighborhood. The decision to go forward with a park design process gives a unique opportunity to explore the best way to allow the lake to become a compelling experience in the heart of the surrounding community. Further, the decision to include an artist in the project to develop artwork that will work in tandem with the design further contributing to the potential experiences is very exciting.

The history of land uses around the lake before its present day use as a retail center focused on a railroad and agriculture. Hay fields, assorted crops and orchards were prevalent around the site. There is little recorded information of Native American use in the area. Lake Wittenmyer was the first recorded name for the lake, named after Walt Wittenmyer, a former logger and city clerk for the City of Kirkland. In 1964 the name changed to Lake Watsine for unknown reasons. Most people referred to the lake as Mud Lake until Totem Lake Mall opened in 1973 and the name officially changed to Totem Lake to match the Native American theme of the adjacent mall.

Heavily impacted by farming and development over time, the lake successfully reestablished itself with native vegetation. A few invasive species are established in the area, but they are not prevalent throughout the site. Ninety species of birds, long eared owl, deer, beaver, muskrat, raccoons, coyotes, turtles, bullfrogs and fish have all been seen or reported on site.

The lake is dynamic for a variety of reasons. Urban runoff caused several issues with sedimentation and water quality while flooding is an issue due to clogged outfall pipes and the downstream effects of beaver activity in the Juanita Creek drainage basin. Aerial photographs from 1936 reveal the open water portion of the lake was much larger than its present day condition. There is an unconfirmed rumor that peat mining changed the lake's shoreline. It is also possible the drainage pattern changed and the water level

lowered when I-405 or the mall were developed. Longtime local residents recall a “floating island” of vegetation that moved around the lake. This island has not been seen for several years.

## **A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD FOR A NEW PARK**

Currently Totem Lake is essentially not visible from surrounding properties or roads. The design for the park coupled with the new pedestrian/bike bridge that connects two parts of the popular Cross Kirkland Corridor trail allows this natural area in the midst of developed land to become a full part of the neighborhood. This is a neighborhood that is lacking in any parkland amenities. The adjacent Totem Lake Mall is being redeveloped into a large, mixed-use neighborhood that will become home to many people once finished.

## **ECOLOGY OF TOTEM LAKE**

Urban runoff and flooding has increased sediment transport to Totem Lake. This has accelerated filling of the lake over the years and the natural succession from lake to wetland. Approximately 50% of the lake area has decreased in the last 70-80 years. The lake area will continue to decrease in time due to sedimentation and organic matter production. Organic matter production in the wetland is very high and little of it is exported during flooding. Therefore accretion will be relatively rapid. Any design for the Park must recognize that the lake will fill in overtime and one day may be a wetland with no open water.

The Master plan recognizes this evolution, and looks to enhance the function of the site by enhancing the diversity of vegetation and natural elements that support wildlife function. This will ensure the site continues to provide a benefit to surrounding properties as a respite from urban living, and a place for nature to co-exist with the built environment. The health of Totem Lake will also need to rely on stewardship from surrounding parcels to mitigate their runoff to improve water quality that enters the lake and slow down the rate at which the water enters the system. This will also help to reduce urban flooding events.

The health of the lake and its adjacent wetland is good. Although low in biodiversity, the site provides habitat for several species of birds, beaver, turtles and fish, to name a few. There are good conditions for wildlife viewing.

There are areas of peat within the park allowing some interesting design responses that will effectively work with this “active” soil component.

## **NEW PARK COMPONENTS MAKE UP THE NEW WHOLE**

Berger Partnership undertook the master planning process. The City of Kirkland has hired them to continue on with developing the final design for the park. Berger has extensive experience working with artists on their projects, making this a good opportunity to implement some exciting artwork components.

The new park design is currently reaching 30% and highlights from the park master plan are being revised and further developed in response to final information about soil conditions that are revealing large areas of peat conditions. These conditions, rather than being a problem, are adding an interesting, challenging environmental layer to the park design process. The peat condition in fact will allow the final park design opportunities to showcase the every-changing nature of natural sites.

- The north edge will have a large gathering area and allow the only area of the park to rest and play on the edge of the lake.
- The east edge will feature a boardwalk through the marshy area that connects the existing north edge pathway to a new southeast connection point to the Cross Kirkland Corridor (CKC).
- The south edge will see the CKC continue now to a new pedestrian/bike bridge that will span major arterials/intersection of NE 124<sup>th</sup> Street and 124<sup>th</sup> Ave NE to the existing CKC continuing south.
- The west edge has a boardwalk that finishes the lake loop and connects the pedestrian bridge, the CKC and the park gathering area.

## **PROCESS**

An invitational list of approximately 10 Northwest artists who are clearly qualified and have stated their interest in the project will be compiled.

Because this is by invitation, it is hoped the submittal period to get artists' materials can be shortened. The materials would be reviewed to establish an interview list of 3-4 artists. Following interviews and the final selection of one artist (or team), it would be helpful if a contract can be expedited so the artist could meet with Berger Partnership to get oriented and begin their creative process parallel to design development.

It is recommended that there may be opportunities for an artist, if interested, to propose aspects of their work that could be integrated into the infrastructure of the park along with aspects that are unique. The opportunity to integrate into the fiber of the design and thus overlap with some amount of the construction budget is always beneficial to a limited art budget.

## **SUBMITTAL MATERIAL**

- 15 digital images – format TBD by Kirkland
- A letter of interest focused on describing why and how the applying artist has worked on environmental artworks previously and their connection/interest to this opportunity.
- Resume

## **SCHEDULE - TBD**

1. Develop invitational list of artists
2. Allow 2+ weeks to submit materials
3. Review of materials – select 3-4 person to interview
4. Interviews followed by selection
5. City process to confirm selected artist
6. Expedited contract
7. Artist meets with City and Berger for orientation and to develop work schedule for design process, meetings and deliverables

## **RESOURCES**

- Park Master Plan weblink
- Totem Lake photos
- Totem Lake Mall multi-use development information
- Pedestrian/bike bridge graphics
- Cross Kirkland Corridor information