

**Mayor's column for  
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There has been much ado about the potential sale of the Edmonds School District surplus property at the old Woodway Elementary School in south Edmonds, adjacent to the cemetery. At least 23 suitors have offered bids to the district at or near \$7 million for the 11-acre parcel. The council has wrestled for months over the property, debating potential uses for all or part of the site, and how to pay for it if they decide to move ahead with any offer.

In the end they decided that the two most important things to accomplish were the creation of a neighborhood park, for all-city use, and to maintain the integrity of the neighborhood by requiring that any residential housing that may be built on the site maintain the surrounding neighborhood zoning (RS-8, or 8,000-sq-ft lots). That would preclude requests from developers for higher density developments or PRD's (planned residential developments).

So after months of thinking about what to do, the council instructed me to write a letter to the school district laying out the city's requests for all developers interested in making an offer on the property. We requested that any offer accepted by the district would require that the chosen developer donate at least four acres of land to the city for a park (donate, as in "free"...no strings attached). They also would be required to do all the park improvements "free"...no strings attached. They would be required to maintain RS-8 zoning for housing. And they also were made aware that the city will be doing a drainage improvement project in the area.

You may wonder, why would any developer be willing to accept those terms? I guess we'll find out. In the meantime, congratulations to the council for trying to get a city park without using tax dollars, and for protecting the single-family residential zoning.

Better still is the council's backup plan. If no one agrees to the terms, the city can still buy at least four acres and create a park at the location. A developer would still have to come before the council if he wanted to change the zoning density of any proposed development. And the door would still be open to the council if they wanted to buy more than four acres.

The council has worked long and hard on this project. At one point they even made an offer to the district to buy the entire parcel. The offer was turned down because it was too low. All Edmonds residents and particularly those in the south end of town who have patiently waited for a park should be thankful for the council's efforts on this project.