

Downtown Forum

Urban Dwellers Can't 'Park' It

Urban green space is an afterthought in Seattle. The city has grown too big, too fast. Suddenly, we have a downtown jammed with a burgeoning population. Restaurants, delis, pharmacies and small grocery stores are springing up along every street. In light of this, the desire for an easily accessible spot to park your carcass on a Sunday afternoon, say, in a park, is not unreasonable.

But friendly and inviting parks remain low on the revitalization list. Those of us who live downtown know that the plan does not address this aspect of city living with any urgency. Practically everything about revitalizing Seattle deals with consumer/business concerns. The 15,000 or so people who now live downtown head for Greenlake or Lake Washington or pack up for Golden Gardens or Alki if they want some weekend sunshine.

Unless you have a private lanai or roof garden in your condo or apartment, you're trapped like a rat in your unit on any given sunny day.

In case you're curious about where these few and far between — and mostly unaccessible parks — can be found, here is a list of city parks and their amenities compiled from a Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation "Guide" map.

Myrtle Edwards (Alaskan Way between W Bay & W Thomas), a bicycle/walking path.

Regrade (Third & Bell), a small playground, picnic shelter.

Freeway (Sixth & Seneca), restrooms.

Waterfront (Alaskan Way, Pier 57-61 (south of the Aquarium), 7 picnic tables, beach.

Westlake (only a park for awhile longer), no amenities anyway.

Steinbrueck (Western & Virginia), one play area, 18 picnic tables with shelter.

Prefontaine (Third & Yesler Way), no amenities.

Occidental (Occidental S & S Main), no amenities.

Hing Hay (S King & Maynard S), no amenities.

International Children's (Seventh S & S Lane), a play area and one picnic table.

Those are all of them. Most are cement, although some offer a tiny patch of lawn. Most are not easily accessible from downtown apartments or condos and offer absolutely no amenities. They are often dirty, littered with trash or the benches filled with vagrants and panhandlers.

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Although the Seattle Commons plan, with its dreamy 61 acres of parks and pocket parks is in the making, it will take up to five years to acquire the properties. By the time all the land is bought and businesses relocated, a portion of the Commons might be complete around the year 2005.

In the meantime, we have a relatively new and fast growing neighborhood downtown that includes condos and apartments galore. Many of these have recreation areas, but nothing can replace a bit of green lawn and some nice landscape, the hassle-free urban equivalent of your own backyard. ■



Guest Column

Dog Owners Are People,

Last October, I attended a meeting at the Seattle C
Drago to find a solution to the lack of legal off-leash

Downtown Forum

'Tis Not the Only Season To Be Giving

Yes, it's that time of year again. You know the one, around the first of November, when the Ghost of Holiday Magnanimity appears in full drag. We take ourselves to task for last year's ignoble thoughts and deeds. We start to think of ways to assuage our guilty consciences, during this merriest of seasons. We think thoughts that would never occur to us in March or August.

Oh sure, we haven't given the poor, the homeless or the less fortunate so much as a passing glance all year. We do now. During the holidays, the need to do something loving and generous — something in the real holiday spirit — can be overwhelming.

For many of us, a donation to a favorite charity is easy, the least invasive way of getting ourselves off the do-gooder hook. A check mailed off into the ozone and *voilà*: we made a difference. No muss, no fuss, and no question — checks are appreciated. The truth is, cash counts.

Step two: the quick call to a local agency to volunteer the entire family for Thanksgiving or Christmas Day soup kitchen duty. We find ourselves duking it out with the rest of the rest of the once-a-year volunteer army for the honor of ladling the gravy. Agencies are inundated with calls from volunteers who want to help out during the holidays, especially on Thanksgiving and Christmas Days.

Most programs that help the needy are open 365 days a year. While holiday-time offers are appreciated, says Bill Wippel of Union Gospel Mission, most agencies run year-round, and during the rest of the year, they go begging for volunteers. Calls from people who want to give their time during the holidays are great; calls at any other time of the year are the ones that make the difference to the success of these programs.

The spirit of giving to others touches many of us about now. Somehow, January through October, we forget, we put it off, we're a little short of cash, a little short of time or inclination. How do we become one of the people who are wonderfully giving? The kind of people that Betty Peterson of the Millionair Club Charity, Inc. describes as the ones who give on a regular basis, who have made giving to others a significant part of their lives.

Keep in mind, January 1 is coming. If we want to make changes, we must be realistic. When the New Year rolls around, thoughts of dieting and bill paying loom large. So let's take a minute today to write a twelve-month series of checks to our favorite charity and send them off with a note to cash one a month for the next year. Or call and volunteer our time for next July and get it on our calendar now!

We can't afford to put what's most important on hold for yet another year. What we do this year might really make us the heroes that we long to be next year.

Happy Thanksgiving. ■

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Guest Column

The Invasion of the Politic



"There's still time to clear Contract with America) looks going to fall for it a second time."
 "The president has more t ahead in my district 48 to 44 it will make an even bigger d
 — U.S. Rep. Norm Dic
 speech at the Flag Pavilio
 "Norm Dicks is a liberal