



Site map shows two newly purchased lots that will expand Gateway Park. *Courtesy Key Pen Parks*

## Gateway Park Is Expanding

ALICE KINERK, KP NEWS

Key Pen Parks is getting ready to make Gateway Park bigger and better after purchasing two adjacent wooded parcels in July totaling 33 acres.

"We're excited because it's all connected. It's all right there," Key Pen Parks' Executive Director Scott Gallacher said. The new parcels connect Gateway Park with nearby 360 Trails, adding up to a combined 430-acre park.

Plans include expansion of the wooded

trails for walking, horseback riding or viewing the resident herons and other animals in their habitats. Multiple fields, a picnic shelter, playground equipment and a splash pad will make the park a family destination.

Gallacher hopes to add a synthetic turf field for team sports as well as a rain garden and flag pavilion. Key Pen Parks has also talked with the Key Peninsula Historical Society about the possibility of moving to Gateway Park.

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### GATEWAY PARK FROM PAGE 1

One immediate change will be the removal of the line of cedar trees that run between the park and State Route 302. Key Pen Parks is required to remove the trees as part of the permitting process by Tacoma Public Utilities, which owns the strip of land between the park and the road.

"Our arborist believes these trees will soon be an issue for our power lines and topping them will only prolong the problem, so we would like Key Pen to remove them when the other tree work is being performed on-site," Dylan Harrison, real estate officer with Tacoma Public Utilities, wrote in an email.

"We don't take down trees just to take them down," Gallacher said. "The positive is that we are going to plant the right tree in the right location. For every tree that we take down, we plant three."

The removed trees will also be put to good use. Options include selling the cedar boughs to a company that makes Christmas wreaths with proceeds going to Key Pen Parks, making wood chips for use on trails, or using the lumber for split-rail fencing on park properties.

Manke Lumber was the previous owner of the two parcels. With easements already in place from Manke for trails between 360 and Gateway Park, Key Pen Parks had been asking Manke about the possibility of buying it for more than three years when they finally agreed to sell. "We were kind of shocked. We'd been working on this for a while," Gallacher said.

Harry Rydell, a local resident and land surveyor at Manke Lumber, was instrumental in helping with the sale, along with former Key Pen Parks Commissioner Bill Trandum. County Councilman Derek Young also worked to make the sale possible.

Key Pen Parks is trying to move forward as quickly as possible, though construction might not begin until 2017. "We're plugging along on permits," Gallacher said. "The challenge is if we start construction this year, there is the potential for wet conditions."

Key Pen Parks received significant financial assistance to purchase the parcels from Pierce County Conservation Futures Program (PCCFP), which has reimbursed about \$160,000 of the total \$280,000 price.

While Key Pen Parks did need to borrow some of the funds to purchase the land, expenses related to improving the land will come from other sources. In August, Gallacher traveled to Olympia to urge government leaders to help with the cost of the planned splash pad. A splash pad is a recreation area for water play that holds little or no standing water, reducing the risk of drowning and eliminating the requirement for lifeguards on-site.

Key Pen Parks has a history of performing restoration on its properties, such as removing invasive species like Scotch broom and English ivy, and will seek opportunities to restore areas with native plantings, according to Gallacher. A significant portion of the new land will be kept in its current wooded state, with the goal of reducing the adverse impact on habitats.

Little Minter Creek and 6.5 acres of wetland also run through the new parcels. "The restoration planned for Minter Creek will benefit salmon, amphibians, the heron rookery and other local wildlife," said Nicole Hill, PCCFP program coordinator with Pierce County Parks and Recreation Services.