

City of Washougal

Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan



FINAL PLAN
September 2021



Prepared by



www.migcom.com

Acknowledgements

The Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan reflects the priorities of the people of Washougal. Hundreds of interested and involved community members, area leaders, stakeholders and staff spent time and energy voicing their needs and ideas, which are reflected in this Plan. Thank you for being involved and invested in the success of the City's park and recreation system.

Additional acknowledgment goes out to the following for their leadership, commitment and support to make parks and recreation possible.

CITY COUNCIL

Molly Coston, *Mayor*

Paul Greenlee

Julie Russell

David Stuebe

Ernie Suggs

Michelle Wagner

Alex Yost

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Barbara Basnett, *Vice President*

Karen Matz

Rochelle Ramos

Corinne Lorch

Quinton Harold

CITY STAFF

David Scott, *City Manager*

Trevor Evers, *Public Works Director*

Mitch Kneipp, *Community
Development Director*

Will Noonan, *General Service
Operations Manager*

Michelle Wright, *Assistant Public Works
Director*

Kelly Brown, *Administrative Assistant*

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1. Introduction

The Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan (the Plan) sets a renewed direction for the City of Washougal's parks and recreation system. This Plan presents the long-term vision and strategy for the future of parks, recreation facilities, and trails, focusing on needed improvements, resources and maintenance over the next ten years and beyond.

PURPOSE

Specifically, this plan:

- Describes the **context of the system**, including a demographic profile, current levels of service, and related planning efforts;
- Provides an updated **inventory of parks and facilities**, including a condition assessment;
- Identifies new or emerging **park needs and opportunities** for the park system, particularly those resulting from a dynamic, growing community;
- Recommends **projects and actions** to meet community needs and create efficiencies across the system; and
- **Prioritizes recommendations** using a clear and easy to understand process to guide future implementation.

PLANNING PROCESS

Beginning in April 2019, the City initiated the planning process by polling residents to better understand community interests and needs for parks, facilities, trails and open space. The City documented current and future trends influencing park and

recreation preferences. It simultaneously updated the parks and open space inventory to include acquisitions and developments that have been added since the last plan update. Then in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a state-wide mandate to close public parks and recreation services as well any in-person gatherings. This caused the City to rethink the planning process, including how to best involve the community without the ability for in-person meetings and events.

In summer and fall of 2020, the City continued to involve residents in identifying park and recreation priorities and evolving needs by providing a second community-wide questionnaire. A technical park system access analysis documented the condition and distribution of resources across the city. These findings as well as discussions with the Park Board helped update the vision, goals and recommendations for the future. Using this framework, the City then identified specific projects, recommendations and priorities for the park and recreation system.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The people of Washougal were directly involved in understanding system-wide needs and identifying ideas and priorities to carry out the Plan. The community engagement process involved a variety of activities designed to stimulate participants' thinking about needs, preferences, and new ideas. Results and input from the Park Board informed the planning process and recommendations.

- **2019 Park Survey:** The City of Washougal conducted an open access online survey for parks and recreation in April 2019. The survey resulted in 99 responses.
- **2020 City Satisfaction Survey:** During the spring of 2020, the City of Washougal conducted a random sample mail survey to understand satisfaction with City services. There were 517 completed surveys resulting in a 95% level of confidence.
- **2020 Parks Plan Questionnaire:** From August 9, 2020, through October 10, 2020, the City used an online questionnaire to gather information about existing conditions and future opportunities for parks, recreation and open spaces. This questionnaire helped identify how needs had evolved since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants accessed the online questionnaire through a link on the City's website. Appendix B provides a summary of results.
- **Park Board Meeting:** The project team met with the Washougal Park Board several times to introduce the planning process, identify existing opportunities and challenges facing the city, and gain a better understanding of the Board's roles and responsibilities. Through these

meetings, the Park Board helped revise the system-wide goals and policies and confirmed priority recommendations.

- **Social Media Comments:** During the summer of 2020, the City of Washougal solicited comments related to parks and recreation from the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

PLAN REQUIREMENTS

This Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan must address the requirements of the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA), and the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Growth Management Act (GMA)

The GMA requires fast-growing Washington cities and counties to develop a comprehensive plan to manage population growth. In accordance with the GMA, the City of Washougal's Comprehensive Plan provides direction for public services and growth for a twenty-year time period. The Parks & Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan identifies goals and policies for city-wide park, recreation and open space services. Other elements, including Natural Resources & Critical Areas, provide additional city-wide goals and policies that are related to the park and open space system. This Comprehensive Park & Recreation Plan will serve as an update to the City's Parks & Open Space elements and should be adopted by reference as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Recreation Conservation Office (RCO)

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is the state agency that manages multiple grant programs supporting the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board. RCO looks for a minimum of six elements in a plan for a city to be eligible and competitive for grant funding. In addition to formal plan adoption, Table 1 identifies how this Plan addresses each of the required plan elements.

TABLE 1: PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	GMA	RCO	Location Reference
Public involvement		•	Chapters 1 and 3
Intergovernmental coordination	•		Chapters 3, 4 and App. D
Inventory (condition and capacity)		•	Chapter 2 and App. A
Goals and objectives		•	Chapter 3
Demand estimates (GMA requires at least a ten-year period)	•	•	Chapters 3 and 5
Six-year capital improvement program		•	Chapter 5 and Appendix C



Washougal Waterfront Park (Credit: Port of Camas-Washougal)

2. Existing Conditions

The City of Washougal is surrounded by natural and scenic beauty, given its location on the bank of Columbia River. Known as the “Gateway to the Gorge,” Washougal’s setting and proximity to the Portland/Vancouver metro area make it a desirable place to live. The City is responsible for 20 parks and recreation areas totaling over 120 acres. Together, these resources provide a variety of options for recreation, while protecting the area’s natural beauty and providing valuable wildlife habitat.

This chapter provides an overview of the characteristics of the park and recreation system, summarizing:

- Washougal’s setting, history, and existing and future population;
- The park system inventory, condition, and gaps in the provision of park land; and
- Key trends in parks and recreation services at the national, state and local level.

SETTING AND HISTORY

Washougal’s location, topography, environment and history all influence the City’s park and recreation opportunities. The City of Washougal is located in southeastern Clark County, approximately 15 miles east of Vancouver and only 20 minutes from Portland’s International Airport. The City currently is 6.3 square miles in size. With the added Urban Growth Area (UGA), it encompasses 8.6 square miles. Located at the west end of the Columbia River Gorge scenic area, Washougal’s character is defined by its proximity to two rivers: the Columbia and the nearby Washougal River,

which winds through the community and drains into the Columbia Mountains. While Washougal's downtown sits on gradually sloping terrain above the Columbia River, the city's topography increases to the north with the highest point reaching approximately 660 feet. Many of the hillsides are steep with some reaching a 40% grade or greater. The Washougal River, SR 14 and the BNSF railway create barriers for north/south connectivity.

Present-day Washougal was originally inhabited by the Chinook Indian people who named the nearby river Washougal, which means "rushing water." Washougal's Columbia River frontage was also one of Lewis and Clark's Corp of Discovery camp sites in the early 1800s.



European settlers began to arrive in the 1830s and continued into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parker built a small dock (Parker's Ferry/Parker's Landing) on the Columbia River to accommodate river boats and platted the town of Parkersville. Early names for the settler community included Parker's Landing, Point Vancouver and Washougahally Camp. Washougal officially incorporated in 1908 and, in 1910, it became the site for one of the first Pendleton Woolen Mills manufacturing facilities. This business is located in downtown Washougal and is the city's largest employer today.

COMMUNITY GROWTH AND CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Washougal has a current population of 16,680¹, which is approximately three percent of the Clark County population. Population estimates show continued growth into the future, as is true across the entire county. For example, nearby Vancouver was the second fastest growing city in Washington state in 2019-2020.² By 2035, Washougal is projecting a future population of 22,347 residents³, an increase of approximately 34% over the next 15 years. This growth will drive increasing demands for park and recreation opportunities across the city and region.

¹ State of Washington Office of Financial Management, April 1, 2020 Population Forecasts

² State of Washington Office of Financial Management

³ Washougal Comprehensive Plan

Demographics

Parks and recreation services should respond to the needs of different age groups, such as providing places for younger children to play, areas for teens and young adults to gather, and opportunities to socialize and stay healthy for older adults. In Washougal, the city has a younger population, with a greater percentage of population under age 18 and lower percentage of residents 65 years and greater than the county and state average (Table 2).

TABLE 2: AGE CHARACTERISTICS, CITY OF WASHOUGAL, COUNTY AND STATE

	City of Washougal	Clark County	State of Washington
Under 18	25.7%	23.5%	22.3%
65 years and greater	14.2%	16%	16.5%

Source: US Census population estimates, July 1, 2019

As a valuable public service, City parks and programs should be welcoming and accessible with services and information that relate to all residents, including people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. While Washougal's population is less diverse than county or state averages, Hispanic or Latino residents make up 6.8% of the city's population (Table 3). This could be significant for selected park sites with a large portion of Hispanic and Latino residents living nearby.

TABLE 3: RACE/ETHNICITY CHARACTERISTICS, CITY OF WASHOUGAL, COUNTY AND STATE

	City of Washougal	Clark County	State of Washington
White alone	88.4%	86.1%	76.3%
Hispanic or Latino	6.8%	10.2%	18.5%
Language other than English spoken at home	6.0%	15%	21.6%

Source: US Census population estimates, July 1, 2019

In Washougal, more residents own their home. There is a higher median household income than the county and state percentages (Table 4). That means, on average, residents many have a greater ability to pay for and travel to City-provided and regional recreation services. However, 7.4% of residents are below the poverty level, which likely limits their abilities to access for-cost or far-away recreation options.

TABLE 4: HOUSING, INCOME, AND POVERTY CHARACTERISTICS, CITY OF WASHOUGAL, COUNTY AND STATE

	City of Washougal	Clark County	State of Washington
Owner-occupied housing rate	76.2%	67%	64%
Median HH income	\$91,100	\$75,253	\$62,843
Poverty rate	7.4%	9.2%	10.5%

Source: US Census population estimates, July 1, 2019

Health and Social Connections

Community health is another important determinant in understanding potential park and recreation needs. Park and recreation services provide access to play, exercise, social interaction and other benefits to support healthy living. According to Clark County data, Washougal has higher levels of adults with a chronic disease, and a greater



percentage of adults who smoke. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death globally and in the United States. Four out of five CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes, and one third of these deaths occur prematurely in people under 70 years of age.⁴

Social and community connections are another important indicator of health and well-being. According to the Community Health Needs Assessment, studies have shown that the magnitude of health risk associated with social isolation are similar to that of smoking cigarettes.⁵ In addition, "civic participation, discrimination, racism, incarceration, and social cohesion affects the lives of individuals throughout the region in a myriad of ways. Strong social and community connections are key to addressing health outcomes."⁶ This means that City park and programs play an important role in ensuring individual and community health and well-being by supporting fitness, fostering community events and social gatherings, providing

⁴ Healthier Clark County InfoMap

⁵ 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment, Healthy Columbia Willamette Collaborative

⁶ 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment, Healthy Columbia Willamette Collaborative

play space and sports facilities for families and youth, and providing trails for recreation activities.

Employment and Economy

Local businesses and workers in Washougal also rely on the park and recreation system. Public parks, trails and even recreation programs can be valuable assets that can help attract or retain local businesses, while supporting a viable workforce. The Comprehensive Plan notes that there are more residents in Washougal than jobs, so many residents commute outside of the city. This is reflected in a higher average commute time for city residents. Based on recent estimates, there are 7,621 employed residents, with most in educational services/healthcare/social assistance (18.5%), manufacturing (13.8%) and professional or related services (11.7%).⁷

Development

The City of Washougal has experienced continuous housing growth over the past decade. New residents add to park and recreation service impacts and needs. The location of new development affects proximity and access to parks, suggesting that new parks may be needed to serve future growth areas. Much of the developable residential land in Washougal is located on the west side of the city in the northwest Urban Growth Area, such as for example, the Hickey/Nesbitt/Farrell property annexed by the City in 2019.

PARK SYSTEM

Washougal residents have access to several different types of parks and natural areas that contribute to community livability and identity, as well as a host of environmental and natural system benefits.

Park Types

City parks are classified according to their function. The City classifies and defines parks by type to provide guidance for the siting, location and design of each park based on its intended purpose and role in the park system.

- **Neighborhood Parks** provide close-to-home recreation opportunities. These parks provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for people living within approximately one-half mile walking distance of the park.
- **Community Parks** are intended for use by the entire city. These parks can accommodate a higher level of use than neighborhood parks and offer facilities that create a community-wide draw.

⁷ US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates

- **Special Use Areas** are unique park sites or stand-alone recreation areas designed to support a specific, specialized use. Examples of existing special use areas in Washougal include the skate park and Reflection Plaza.
- **Pocket Parks** are small sites that are typically landscaped but provide limited recreation benefit. These sites generally have pathways and may provide seating and signage.
- **Waterfront Parks** are distinguished by their function of providing access to water bodies. These parks typically support enjoyment of water-related activities, such as swimming, fishing, boating, and bird or wildlife viewing. Facilities may include boat launches, docks, viewpoints, picnic areas, trails, and pathways.
- **Natural Parks** are undeveloped lands primarily left in a natural state. Most sites are intended to protect open space; passive park facilities may be provided secondarily. This type of land often includes wetlands or steep hillsides. In some cases, environmentally sensitive areas include wildlife habitats, stream and creek corridors, or unique and/or endangered plant species. Frequently, Natural Parks possess restrictions on the deed or plat that govern perpetual use of the property. Natural Parks may serve as trail corridors; however, structures such as playgrounds, pavilions and restrooms are not typically allowed uses.

Park Inventory

The City's park system includes more than 73 acres of developed parks, and another 51 acres of undeveloped natural areas. With approximately 73.2 acres of developed park land, Washougal currently provides 4.39 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.⁸ This does not include the City's natural parks and open space areas which account for significantly more public lands. Table 5 summarizes the park inventory by classification. Map 1 shows the distribution of parks across the city. Small natural parks, frequently less than one acre in size, make up most of Washougal's park system both in number and by area. The City's three community parks make up the next largest portion of the park system by acreage, with two located near the center of the city. The remaining park system includes small neighborhood parks, (many of which are under 0.5 acre in size), special use areas, and waterfront parks.

TABLE 5: PARK INVENTORY

Park Type	Total Sites	Total Acres
Neighborhood Parks*	6	17.6
Community Parks	3	33.6

⁸ Based on 2020 population of 16,680, City of Washougal population estimate.

Park Type	Total Sites	Total Acres
Special Use Areas	6	19.2
Pocket Parks	2	0.3
Waterfront Parks*	2	2.5
Total Developed Parks	17	73.2
Natural Parks	13	51.4

* Does not include undeveloped parks, including Granite Highlands Park (a future neighborhood park) and Ninebark Park (a future waterfront park).

For additional details, see Appendix A.

Trails and Regional Resources

In addition to City parks, the Washougal community has access to regional facilities that provide hundreds of acres of nearby recreational or open space. Major trails are provided by the Port of Camas-Washougal, Clark County and the State. One of the most popular is the Washougal River Greenway located along the Columbia River. Washougal prides itself on a pedestrian tunnel that runs under SR-14 and provides access to the Columbia River from downtown and several City parks and recreation areas. The 80-acre Captain William Clark Park at Cottonwood Beach provides water access, picnic shelters, historic interpretive elements, walking, hiking, and equestrian trails nearby. An entry to the Columbia River Gorge, the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge, and river kayaking opportunities help outdoor activities remain a strong attraction for Washougal residents and visitors alike.

Schools

Schools are an important resource for recreation facilities including sports fields, playgrounds and gymnasiums (Table 6). The Washougal School District is the primary public school organization serving Washougal. While the City of Washougal has the option to work with the District regarding facility rental and use, the school population has first priority to use these facilities. Consequently, the City is limited in its ability to partner with the District, although in certain circumstances the possibility remains an option. School sports fields and facilities, however, do help address community needs.

TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF EXISTING PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

Public Schools	Gyms	Multi-purpose fields	Soccer Fields	Diamond Fields	Sport Courts
Elementary schools	5	2	3	1	-
Middle schools	2	4	-	-	-
High school	1	-	1	4	5
Total	8	6	4	5	5



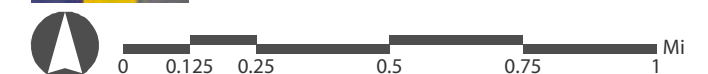
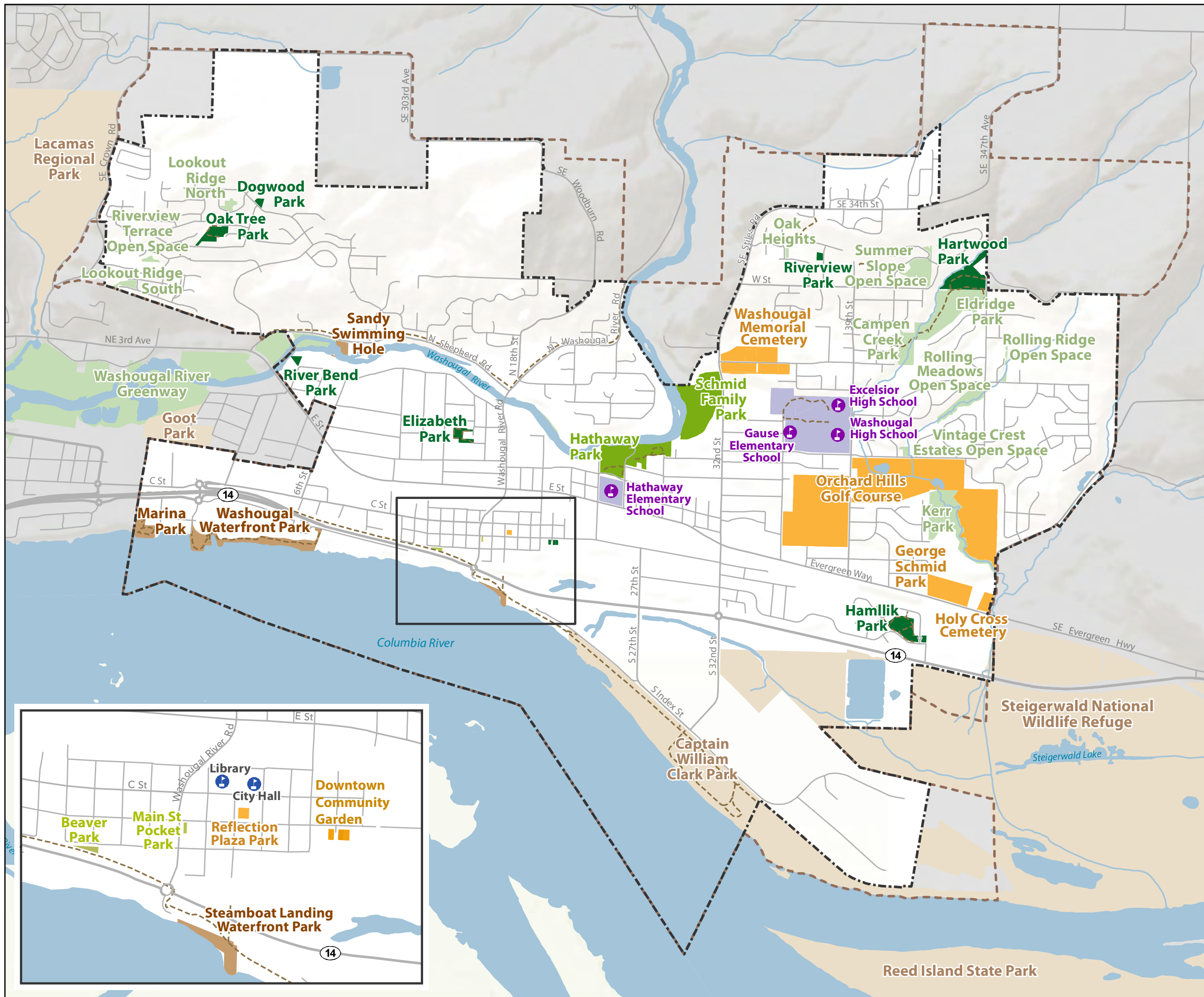
Map 1: Existing Park System

Existing Parks

- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Open Space
- Special Use Site
- Pocket Park
- Waterfront Park
- Other

Basemap Features

- Trail
- School
- Water Feature
- City of Washougal
- Urban Growth Area
- Clark County



Source: Clark County
Date: January 2021

Park System Administration and Maintenance

The City's portion of this park system is managed and maintained by the Public Works Department's Parks Division. Park maintenance and stewardship of is one of the largest budget items in the provision of City park and recreation services. However, the City is short-staffed when it comes to park maintenance. The Parks Division only has 1.5 FTE staff.

The Parks Division manager oversees planning and cemetery operations, along with park maintenance. To support full-time staff, the City hires seasonal maintenance workers for six months to assist with maintenance. In 2021, the City of Washougal budgeted \$552,833 for maintenance. Figure 1 provides three measurements of park maintenance. The staffing and budget needs will continue to grow as the City adds new park and recreation facilities to the park system.

FIGURE 1: PARK MAINTENANCE BY THE NUMBERS



Source: City of Washougal Budget, 2020 and 2021, and MIG

PARK CONDITION ASSESSMENT

The review of current park resources across the City, along with insights from the Washougal Park Board, helped highlight several issues and opportunities to address across the parks system. These findings include the following:



Non accessible parks: Many parks are not ADA accessible, and park features are not connected by accessible paths. For example, Campen Creek Park currently lacks any accessible entry, and site amenities such as picnic tables are not ADA accessible.



Underused or non-contributing land: Several small parcels are currently underutilized or not contributing towards community parks and recreation. These are City-owned properties that are either too small or located or designed in way that limits public use. For example, Dick Beaver Park's proximity to the freeway and small size (0.17 acres) results in an underused space that requires ongoing resources for care and maintenance.



Aging facilities: Park facilities need repair or replacement. Restrooms, playgrounds, sports courts, ballfields and shelters are examples of the types of facilities that are aging, damaged or past their intended lifespan. As an example, many of the facilities in Hamllik Park are aging or past their functional lifespan. The restroom, picnic benches and playground are all in need of replacement or upgrading.



Infrastructure needs: Some parks require expanded or new utilities such as water and power to facilitate more users. New or replaced bridges, parking upgrade and irrigation are all needed throughout the park system. For example, some pathways, such as the pathway in Hathaway Park, are in need of resurfacing, and the bridge in Campen Creek Park is in need of replacement.



Top: Campen Creek bridge
Mid: Hathaway Park pickleball court
Bottom: Hamllik Park restroom
(Images: MIG)



Map 2: Developed Park Access

Access to Community and Neighborhood Parks

- Within 1/4-Mile Walking Distance
- Within 1/2-Mile Walking Distance

The analysis shows access to neighborhood parks and community parks only. The City, school district, and other jurisdictions may have other types of parks or recreation facilities within gap areas that could be considered in meeting park needs.

Existing Parks

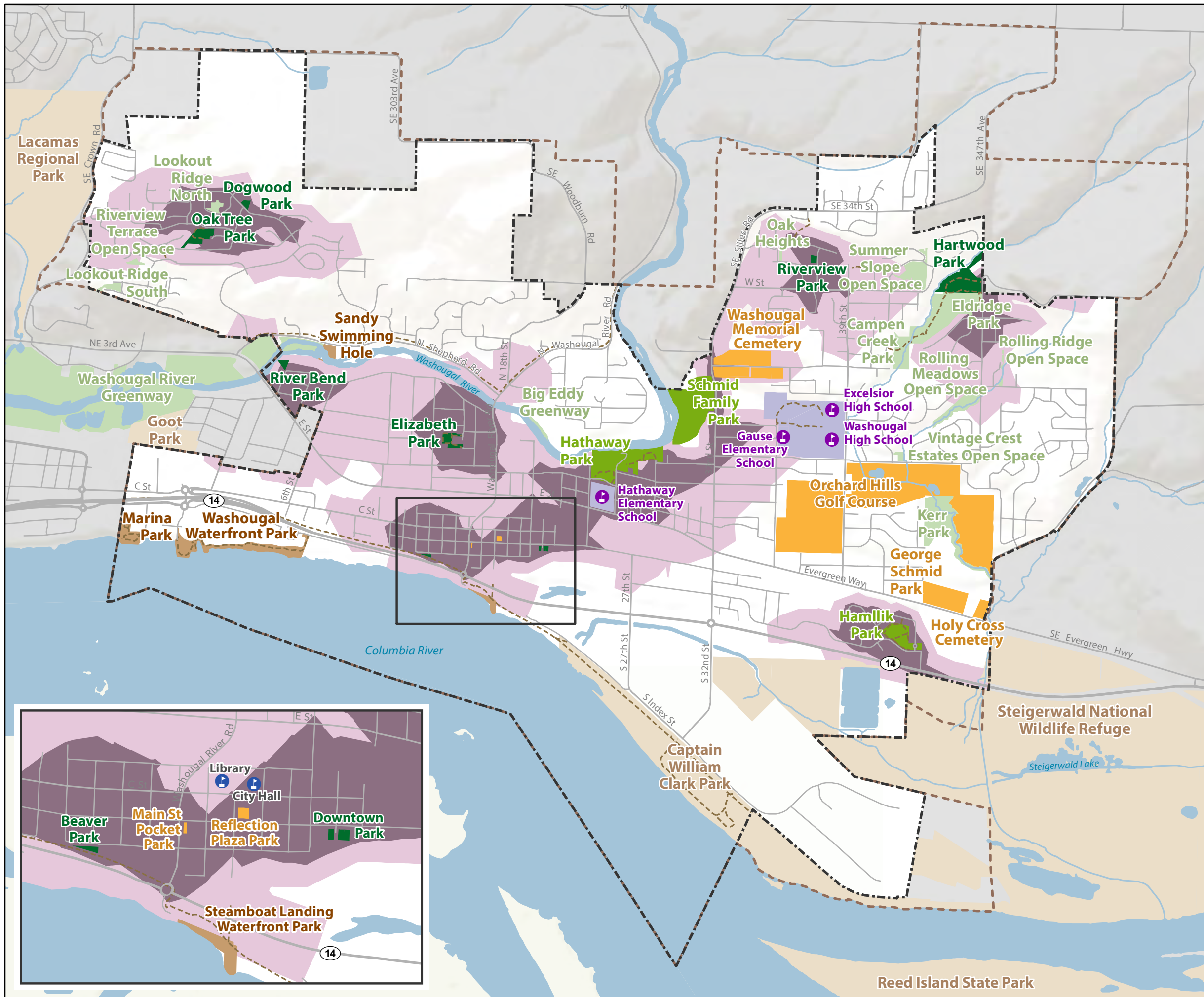
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Open Space
- Special Use Site
- Waterfront Park
- Other

Basemap Features

- Trail
- School
- Water Feature
- City of Washougal
- Urban Growth Area
- Clark County



Source: Clark County
Date: October 2020





Map 3: Developed Park Access and Higher Density Residential

Access to Community and Neighborhood Parks

- Within 1/4-Mile Walking Distance
- Within 1/2-Mile Walking Distance
- Unserved Higher Density Residential Zoning

The analysis shows access to neighborhood parks and community parks only. The City, school district, and other jurisdictions may have other types of parks or recreation facilities within gap areas that could be considered in meeting park needs.

Existing Parks

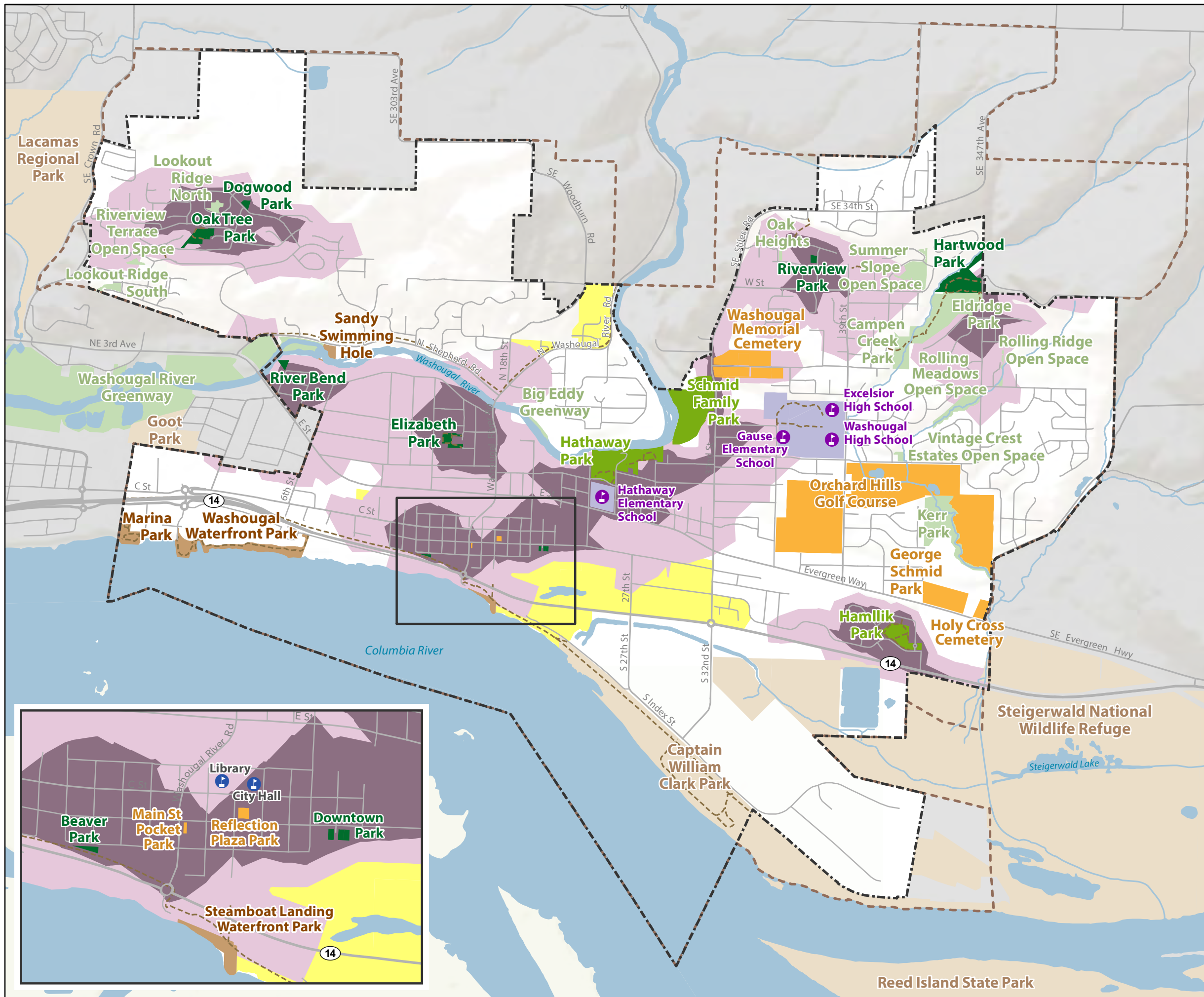
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Open Space
- Special Use Site
- Waterfront Park
- Other

Basemap Features

- Trail
- School
- Water Feature
- City of Washougal
- Urban Growth Area
- Clark County



Source: Clark County
Date: October 2020





Lack of diverse features: Many parks offer similar amenities or lack facilities that make them distinctive from opportunities at nearby parks. Table 7 shows that while several parks offer picnic facilities or shelter, there are minimal unique features such as a bike pump track, splash pad or dog park that could make parks more diverse, unique and fun.

TABLE 7: RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY

Facility Type	Total	Facility Type	Total
Sport fields	8	Picnic facilities	10
Aquatics facility/splash pads	0	Hand boat launch	1
Sport courts	4	Water access/fishing sites	7
Off-leash dog areas	0	Community garden*	1
Skate park	1	Restrooms	6
Shelters	5	Paths (within a park)	9

For additional details, see Appendix A. * Completed Spring 2021.

PARK ACCESS AND GAP ANALYSIS

Though acres per 1,000 has traditionally been a standard metric to measure the sufficiency of park land for cities, it does not address the proximity of parks to community residents. For this reason, the emerging national standard to measure park access is the 10-minute walk, which equates to a travel distance of approximately ¼- to ½-mile. Everyone benefits from living within walking distance of park. This the simple logic behind the 10-Minute Walk campaign led by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI).

Maps 2 and 3 on the following pages show existing park access to community and neighborhood parks.⁹ The purple-shaded areas indicate locations that are within a 10-minute walk to a community or neighborhood park. Maps 2 and 3 shows areas of higher density zoning (in yellow) that are outside a 10-minute walk to parks. The map helps identify areas that might have a greater need for parks and recreation,

⁹ To evaluate 10-minute walk park access, the consultant team used a GIS-based analysis to evaluate where Washougal residential areas (current city limits) have a park within ¼- to ½-mile, using the street and trail network to reach pedestrian access points into existing parks.

since housing in areas zoned for higher density typically have smaller outdoor spaces or lack a yard entirely.

Gap Areas

While many areas of the city have nearby open spaces, some of these same locations don't have convenient access to a developed park. In addition, there are several barriers to park access in Washougal, such as the Washougal River and hilly terrain, as well as busy streets such as highways and NE 3rd Ave or cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets. Areas that are not served by a developed park within a 10-minute walk include:

- Residential areas north of the Washougal River;
- East downtown between 22nd and 34th Streets, which includes areas of higher-density residential zoning;
- The northeast edge of the city, east of Orchard Hills Golf Course; and
- Most of the future growth areas (within the UGB but outside of the city limits).

TRENDS

Trends at the national, state and local level help identify types of facilities, activities and other related factors that are gaining momentum in similar communities. When applied to key park and recreation needs (described in the following chapter), these trends provide ideas to consider in the provision of park and recreation services.



Public Health and Wellness

To combat the national rise of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, public and private entities are exploring ways to promote preventative healthcare and active living, which reduce healthcare costs and improve public health. This includes initiatives such as Park Rx, through which health care practitioners prescribe time outdoors in nature to improve health outcomes. Access to parks and recreation is especially relevant given restrictions on gatherings, social distancing and other restrictions due to the pandemic.

Cultural Relevancy and Responsiveness

Park agencies are responding to the diverse cultural makeup of their communities in a variety of ways, including by improving community outreach and information, providing culturally responsive park design and programming, and even hiring more diverse staff. There is also a growing need for agency-hosted cultural events, vendors and entertainment that reflect a wider array of interests and cultures.

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) conducted primary research to support the State's planning efforts that included participation among diverse racial or ethnic groups. Table 8 compares top activities at the state level among different racial/ethnic groups. While walking is the top activity across all races/ethnicities, other popular activities vary depending on race/ethnicity.

TABLE 8: TOP STATEWIDE RECREATION ACTIVITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

White	Hispanic/Latino	Asians	African Americans
1. Walking – Park or trail setting	1. Walking – Park or trail setting	1. Walking – Park or trail setting	1. Walking – Park or trail setting
2. Visiting rivers or streams	2. Playing	2. Attending an outdoor concert or event	2. Relaxing, reading, hanging out
3. Visiting a beach or tide pools	3. Attending an outdoor concert or event	3. Visiting a beach or tide pools	3. Attending an outdoor concert or event
4. Attending an outdoor concert or event	4. Relaxing, reading, hanging out	4. Day hiking	4. Visiting zoos, gardens, or arboretums
5. Gather or collect things in nature setting	5. Visiting rivers or streams	5. Visiting zoos, gardens, or arboretums	5. Picnicking, BBQ, or cookout

Source: State of Washington 2017 Assessment of Outdoor Recreation Demand Report, Eastern Washington University (July 2017)

Play for All Ages and Abilities

The benefits of play for younger children are well-documented. However, play also benefits all age groups and abilities, including teens, younger and older adults, seniors, multigenerational groups, and special needs populations. In addition, more diverse play experiences are trending, such as nature play, water play, adventure play, thematic and destination play. Universal, all-inclusive play and activity areas are

especially important in the Washougal area where 14.7% of the population is living with a disability, compared to 12.2% in Clark County.¹⁰

Trail-Based Recreation

Nationwide, non-motorized transportation and trail-based recreation activities—including walking, dog-walking, hiking, running and biking—are the top-rated recreational activities across all socio-economic and cultural groups. This creates a greater demand for safe and interesting trails in park systems. According to the 2016



Outdoor Foundation Outdoor Participation Study, running, including trail running, was the most popular outdoor activity in the United States, with more than 53 million participants involved and a participation rate of 18 percent. Table 9 shows top recreation activities for the State of Washington and the Southwest Region. Based on the data, walking is the top activity across at the State and regional level.

TABLE 9: TOP RECREATION ACTIVITIES STATEWIDE AND SOUTHWEST REGION

Activity	State-wide	Activity	SW Region
1. Walking – Park or trail setting	84%	1. Walking – Park or trail setting	86%
2. Visiting rivers or streams	66%	2. Visiting rivers or streams	69%
3. Visiting a beach or tide pools	60%	3. Visiting a beach or tide pools	65%
4. Attending an outdoor concert or event	58%	4. Attending an outdoor event	58%
5. Gather or collect things in nature setting	54%	5. Day hiking	55%

Source: State of Washington 2017 Assessment of Outdoor Recreation Demand Report, Eastern Washington University (July 2017)

¹⁰ Clark County InfoMap

Connecting Youth with Nature

Across the country, there is a movement to reconnect youth with nature and the outdoors. This is largely in response to the decreased time kids spend outdoors compared to previous generations and the associated negative physical and mental health impacts. Parents and professionals alike express concerns about the ill effects of a sedentary lifestyle, too much screen time, and too little exploratory, unstructured outside play for children.

An Active, Aging Population

As people live longer, the population of “seniors” encompasses multiple generations, including retirees who are in good health, physically active, and uninterested in participating in typical “senior center” activities. Instead, there is a growing interest in leisure activities for older adults, such as art-related programs and senior sports clubs, and in multi-generational settings.

Art in Public Places

Art in public spaces can express the multifaceted and culturally diverse qualities of a community, as well as a city’s brand and identity. Many parks and public spaces in Washougal have public art integrated into their design. Using art as a component of the park’s initial design or its renovation will showcase local identity and can promote cultural, environmental or historic values. Many cities have established percent for art programs to ensure that art is incorporated into public places.



Sandy Swimming Hole (Credit: Alisha Jucevic/The Columbian)

3. Plan Framework

Community engagement outcomes, a technical analysis of the park inventory and conditions assessment, and current and emerging recreational trends are combined to define the needs and future direction of the Washougal park system over the next ten years. This chapter presents the plan framework and is organized into the following three sections:

- **Key Needs:** Combines community desires with the technical analysis to identify key needs to carry through into potential and more specific recommendations;
- **Vision:** Describes the long-term direction for parks and recreation; and
- **Goals and Policies:** Identifies specific directives needed to carry out the vision.

KEY NEEDS

A number of commonalities emerged from stakeholder and advisory group input, analysis of gaps and trends, and community engagement. Findings illustrate the types of facilities and activities that residents enjoy the most, the challenges they see, and their ideas for improving the park system. The following key needs identify a direction for further planning and investment.

Add Unique Destinations

An off-leash dog area, community garden, skate parks, bike pump track and disc golf course are some of the recreation destinations that received interest from the community. The 2020 City Satisfaction Survey found that a dog park was one of the most important future priorities. Adding special facilities was also one of the critical needs noted in the 2019 Park Survey, with water playgrounds and off-leash dog areas being at the top of the list.

Improve Play Opportunities

Places to play, learn, explore and have fun are all important elements of parks and recreation. Play is a top need in Washougal, including fun and interactive play areas that incorporate water and nature into site and facility design. Comments from the questionnaire noted that while Washougal has some great play areas, not all residents have a safe or convenient way to get to these destinations, especially when walking or biking with kids. Respondents to the online questionnaire and on social media gave several examples of play areas that could serve as inspiration in Washougal (see side images for sites noted).

Provide Close-to-Home Recreation

Many respondents expressed a need for recreation that is close to home. Several comments on social media and in the open-ended comments of the online questionnaire asked about improvements that create better access to existing parks. Responses from the questionnaire show that parks and trails have the



Top: Fisher Basin Park, Vancouver, WA
 Mid: First Federal Bank Park, Twin Falls, ID
 Bottom: Westmoreland Park, Portland, OR

same or greater use as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Forty-six percent of respondents are using parks or trails the same or more since park closures, compared to 37.7% who are using them less. Several comments noted the potential to reuse underdeveloped park spaces or open space for public use such as a community garden, dog park, or play area.

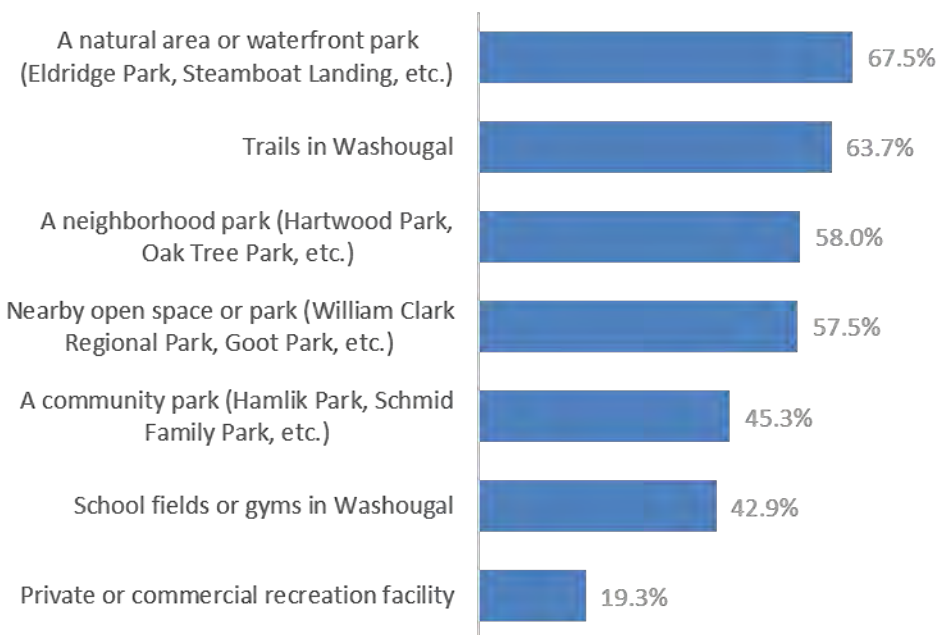
Improve Communication

Education, communication and awareness are some of the potential ways to improve access to nearby recreation. According to the 2019 Park Survey, not knowing what's available or where parks are located were some of the top reasons respondents aren't using parks.

Protect Access to Nature

Access to natural areas is one of the top needs in Washougal. Questionnaire respondents chose "being surrounded by trees, plants, water and wildlife" as the most important aspect of parks and recreation in Washougal and natural areas or waterfront parks are of the topmost frequented types of park land. Prior to COVID-19, 67.5% of questionnaire respondents said that they visit natural areas or waterfront parks regularly or frequently when in season (Figure 2). Members of the Park Board also identified the protection of open space as a major priority and opportunity for the park system.

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES VISITED ON A REGULAR/FREQUENT BASIS (MASTER PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE)



Source: MIG

Create Safe and Connected Routes

Trails and trail-related activities such as walking, biking and running are top needs in Washougal. The 2020 City Satisfaction Survey found that trails were one of the most important future priorities. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, questionnaire respondents indicated that biking, walking or running in parks or in trails were their top activities (Figure 3).

Many comments noted walking or biking as an activity they are doing more during the pandemic. New connections that link parks and neighborhoods are also critical to improving connectivity to parks and recreation in areas without convenient access.

FIGURE 3: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN WASHOUGAL? (MASTER PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE)



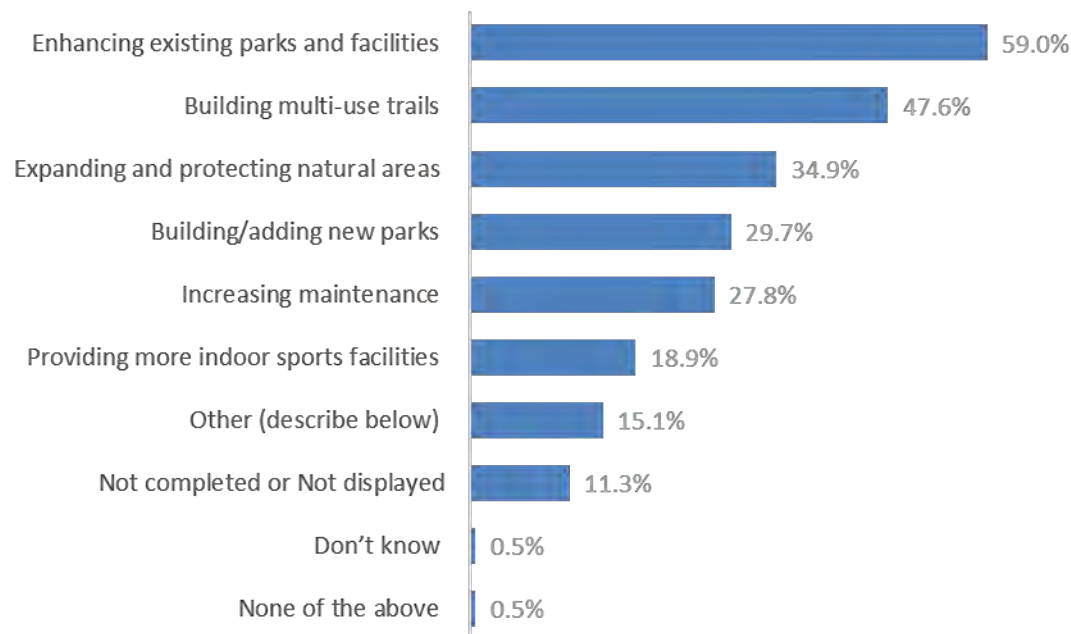
Source: MIG

Promote Maintenance and Reinvestment

According to the 2020 City Satisfaction Survey, the quality of parks ranked as one of the top priorities across City service categories. Members of the Park Board noted that many parks and recreation facilities are aging, and there is a need to maximize use of existing facilities and reinvest in City parks.

The Master Plan questionnaire found that “enhancing existing parks and facilities” was the top choice for funding priorities (Figure 4). At the same time, the City doesn’t have adequate resources to keep up with the backlog of maintenance issues.

FIGURE 4: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE OUR TOP FUNDING PRIORITIES? (MASTER PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE)



Source: MIG

VISION

Based on community interests and aspirations identified through public outreach, Washougal's vision for the parks and recreation system is described below.

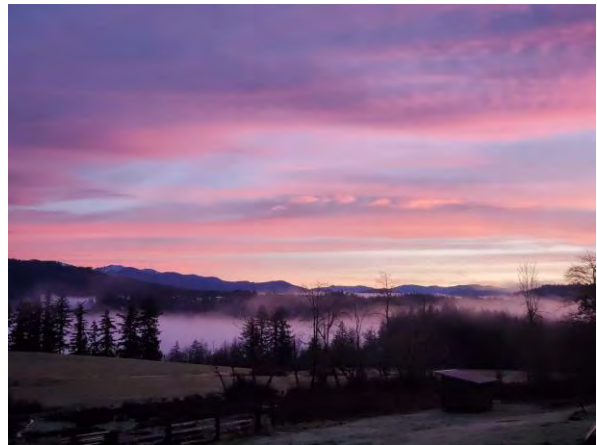
Washougal's park and recreation system is a valued public service that supports community livability while building on the city's unique setting and diverse history and culture. High quality and well-maintained parks and recreational facilities, interconnected trails and natural areas are close to residents and workers, while future resources are available to serve community growth.

The Washougal and Columbia Rivers are important elements of this system and there are a range of waterfront parks, trails and open spaces to connect with the water and preserve critical habitat areas. The City partners with a range of providers, community volunteers and other entities to offer events, programs and activities that are equitable, fun and memorable.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals are the desired outcomes to be achieved by implementing the Park & Recreation Plan. Goals provide direction for more specific policies and recommendations to guide future decisions and ensure consistent long-term direction for service provision.

Each goal contains multiple policies that establish specific directions for the system. Policies reflect public needs, past and current planning efforts, as well as strategic planning, design and management principles. Policies will achieve the stated goals and provide systemwide direction for park and recreation services. (Note: the following numbering system does not indicate priority order.)



Goal 1: Provide well-designed, accessible and safe parks, recreation facilities, and natural open space areas.

- 1.A Reinvest in existing park and recreation facilities to meet needs in developed areas. Identify underused areas of developed parks to increase opportunities and renew park character.
- 1.B Secure adequate parkland in developing areas to serve future residents.
- 1.C Develop a park system with locations convenient to most residents in Washougal. Where feasible, provide a park within a ten-minute walk (about a ¼- or ½-mile distance) of residential areas.
- 1.D Provide opportunities for indoor and covered recreational activities, such as a gymnasium, indoor recreation center, or covered playground areas.
- 1.E Adopt and follow park design and development guidelines for all new park land, including parks that will be dedicated to the City.
- 1.F Coordinate with other City departments to ensure that new development is oriented towards parks and trails.
- 1.G Integrate natural features, such as green stormwater improvements, and adding trees, shrubs and other plants into the built environment, including residential, commercial and industrial areas.
- 1.H Accept only those parks and facilities that are consistent with the City's Parks & Recreation Plan.

- 1.I Incorporate interpretation of local history, culture, and the environment into the park system.

Goal 2: Maximize opportunities for public enjoyment and protection of waterfront resources.

- 2.A Recognize the Washougal and Columbia Rivers as unique local recreation resources.
- 2.B Pursue continuous and connected riverfront greenway systems along the Columbia and Washougal Rivers. Acquire riverfront property or easements whenever the opportunity exists.
- 2.C Provide opportunities for public access to the waterfront where conditions permit it.
- 2.D Geographically distribute waterfront parks and access points as practical as possible to provide greater park access throughout the city.
- 2.E Provide a range of waterfront recreation experiences, including opportunities to access the river and riverfront, or places to view the water.
- 2.F Preserve areas with critical or unique natural features, such as stream corridors, wildlife habitat and wetlands.
- 2.G Support efforts for habitat protection, conservation and similar projects and programs to strengthen the health of natural systems and the environment.

Goal 3: Connect neighborhoods, schools, downtown, and waterfronts with parks, trails and natural open space areas.

- 3.A Develop an interconnected pedestrian and bicycle system that connects downtown and neighborhoods with parks, schools, and other features.
- 3.B Connect the City's pedestrian and bicycle system with the Camas and Clark County regional systems.
- 3.C Develop a network of off-street trails using natural open space areas, parks, utility corridors, and other features. Supplement this network with on-street connections where necessary.
- 3.D Provide an interconnected trail system along the Columbia and Washougal Rivers.
- 3.E Continue building partnerships to expand connectivity within the city and through the region.
- 3.F Provide a consistent and accessible signage and wayfinding system that welcomes and informs users.

Goal 4: Strategically facilitate recreation programs and community events to foster community health, recreation participation and park use.



- 4.A Foster recreational, educational and cultural opportunities in parks through partnerships that promote healthy, active lifestyles, play and learning, and social gathering.
- 4.B Recruit contract providers to offer fee-based programs in parks that respond to current trends and community desires
- 4.C Create a scholarship program or volunteer credit system that enables economically disadvantaged residents to participate in local fee-based programs.
- 4.D Encourage collaboration among local artists, businesses, and volunteers to foster a stronger sense of community and City identity through education, tourism, city beautification, and recreation opportunities.
- 4.E Coordinate with private and non-profit providers (such as organized sports leagues) to encourage a greater variety of programming in parks and ensure adequate facilities and space are available for recreation services.
- 4.F Promote opportunities to activate Downtown Washougal by recruiting providers or partners to offer community-wide events, mid-day programming for workers, and evening activities that help support local tourism and enjoyment of the city center.
- 4.G Promote healthy food choices and active living programs as a central focus for community education.

Goal 5: Provide efficient and high-quality maintenance of parks, facilities, and natural open space areas.

- 5.A Maintain park and recreation facilities in a manner to make them safe, attractive, and a positive part of the neighborhood and city.
- 5.B Develop maintenance frequency protocols that maximize the life of the City's park and recreation assets.
- 5.C Maximize efficient use of the maintenance budget.

- 5.D Consider the maintenance costs and staffing levels associated with acquisition, development, or renovation of parks or natural open space areas. Adjust the annual operating budget accordingly for adequate maintenance funding of the system expansion.
- 5.E Streamline maintenance resources by divesting or transferring ownership of parks that do not contribute to the vision and goals of the park system.
- 5.F Monitor and maintain natural areas to control invasive species and improve ecological functions.
- 5.G Develop site-specific master plans or site designs that guide all major park improvements, incorporate maintenance efficiencies, and achieve cohesive design and efficient phasing of projects.
- 5.H Provide better tracking of the costs of maintaining City-owned facilities by their function, including public buildings, infrastructure, parks and natural areas, and the cemetery.

Goal 6: Be an efficient and effective provider of the parks and recreation services desired by the community.

- 6.A Continue partnering with the Washougal School District to maximize public use of recreation facilities on school sites, especially for athletic fields.
- 6.B Leverage and periodically update funding and land dedication mechanisms to ensure that new development is responsible for providing or paying a fair share for the park and recreation facilities needed to serve increased population.
- 6.C Maintain an annual operating budget that is sufficient to address park asset management and maintenance needs .
- 6.D Maximize operational efficiency to provide the greatest public benefit for the resources expended.
- 6.E Tailor services and operating hours to community needs, so that policies, work schedules, and administrative direction support public use of parks and services.
- 6.F Develop staff growth by encouraging participation in professional organizations, educational classes and training seminars.

Goal 7: Encourage public involvement in all aspects of parks and recreation.

- 7.A Support the Park Board as the forum for public discussion of parks and recreation policies, ideas, opportunities and concerns.

- 7.B Provide public review opportunities in park planning and design decisions.
- 7.C Identify opportunities for community members, local artists and businesses to actively contribute to park and facility design and development.
- 7.D Establish publicity efforts to inform citizens of the recreational and volunteer opportunities available in local neighborhoods and citywide.
- 7.E Periodically review local park and recreation preferences, needs and trends and update priorities identified in this Plan.
- 7.F Encourage citizen involvement and participation in maintaining and restoring the quality of parks (such as adopt-a-park programs, sports group partnerships, and Scout projects).



4. System-Wide Recommendations

Recommendations provide additional directions to help the City carry out the goals and policies. Building on past efforts, this Plan anticipates a continued expansion of the City's responsibilities in providing park and recreation services to respond to increasing demands and needs. In general, the City's role should include:

- Assessing park and recreation needs in the community;
- Developing and maintaining a quality park system;
- Coordinating service delivery efforts with organizations in the community;
- Encouraging strategic partnerships that result in programs and services that meets needs consistent with the goals of this Plan.

These recommendations in this chapter are designed to build capacity within the City to increase services. The following recommendations build on guidance from the previous plan updated to reflect the renewed vision and goals. These are organized into five service areas:

- Administration, management and communications;
- Planning, design and development;
- Maintenance and operations, and;
- Events and programs.

These recommendations support the capital projects and implementation strategy noted in Chapter 5.

ADMINISTRATION, MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

- **Engage the community about gradual reopening of parks and recreation and build future funding support.** When COVID-19 health restrictions lift for use of parks and for public gathering, the City will need to continue working together to ensure consistent and effective communication with the public. This should include continuing to work with State and County public health officials to understand, communicate and adjust rules and messaging related to public use of parks and social gathering opportunities. This communication creates an opportunity to build support around potential future funding mechanisms and new projects. It will be important to employ public input, education, outreach and polling before any specific funding mechanism is attempted.
- **Continue to rely on the Park Board as the review body for all parks-related issues and policies.** The Board makes recommendations to City Council, advising on policies related to parks and recreation. The Board also reviews park designs and provides a key role in guiding parks and recreation services. The Park Board is a critical element for implementing this Plan and instrumental in the success of the City's park and recreation system.
- **Establish an annual work program and performance goals.** Each year, an annual work program and performance goals document should be developed for parks and recreation in Washougal. The Park Board and staff should participate in setting the priorities and specific work tasks for the coming year. At the end of the year, an evaluation should be made to measure performance.
- **Improve cost and revenue tracking for parks and recreation services.** One of the most important items in controlling costs and producing revenue is a good budget reporting system. At minimum, the City should be able to review the cost of maintaining its parks, trails, and natural open space areas on a per-acre and per Full Time Equivalent employee (FTE) basis. As recreation programs are added, program costs and revenues should be tracked by major program areas (e.g., sports, general recreation, seniors, and outdoor/environmental programs). Good budget tracking of program costs will allow the City to make management, marketing, or programming improvements. As an added benefit, accurate cost tracking also provides information for budgeting and for planning future facilities.

- **Update impact fees.** The City is updating its impact fees in 2021 to ensure that they reflect the cost of developing park and recreation facilities to accommodate new development. The fee schedule should undergo regular evaluation or build in an automatic cost escalator to account for annual inflation and elevated economic markets.
- **Continue building revenue-generating capacity to reinvest in the system.** As more comprehensive services are offered, revenue can be generated through rental fees, user fees, program fees, and sponsorships. While increased services may result in a bigger budget, the net financial cost to the taxpayer may be nearly the same if programs that can recover full costs are targeted.
- **Maintain community access to school recreation facilities.** The City should continue the strong relationship with the School District where School District facilities are available for public use during non-school hours, and the District contributes towards maintenance. Periodically update the City-School joint use agreement and consider site-specific partnership opportunities for sports field, indoor/gym space and facility development.
- **Improve communication with the broader community.** One of the key needs noted by the community is the need to improve communication related to parks and recreation services and opportunities. The City should create a public education and community relations campaign to describe the maintenance/asset management issue and communicate the tradeoffs needed to sustain critical resources in parks and recreation programming. Part of this campaign should include public relations guidelines to manage requests or complaints in the event of budget cuts.
- **Develop and follow an inclusion policy based on NRPA's Parks for Inclusion guidelines.** The policy should provide direction on inclusive operations on all aspects of park operations including, communication, engagement, design, programming, and employment. Use universal graphics and imagery for all park and recreation communications.



PLANNING, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Involve parks and recreation staff in the planning so that maintenance and programming requirements are considered.** Maintenance staff should be consulted during the site selection process, development negotiation, and site design process to identify maintenance requirements and identify potential cost- and labor-saving measures. Labor-saving devices such as mow strips, no-mow zones, “natural” areas, appropriate path layout, time-activated locks, and other features should be incorporated into parks to facilitate maintenance. When recreation programs are added in the future, the staff responsible for these should also be included so that programming requirements are addressed.
- **Increase the role of the Park Board in reviewing plans for public parks.** The Park Board should review all public parks and recreation facility designs, including review of planned public parks proposed by developers. The Park Board’s role should aid in reviewing recommendations to ensure that developer-proposed parks are consistent with this Plan, meet the City’s design and development guidelines, and serve the needs of Washougal residents.
- **Use design guidelines as a basis for new parks and improvements.** Design guidelines (Appendix E) are intended to ensure that appropriately sized and scaled parks provide different recreation opportunities, and that the right amenities and facilities are provided in the right places within the park system. The City should rely on the general guidelines outlined in Appendix E to carry future improvement and investments related to park and trail planning and design.
- **Ensure that private neighborhood parks meet the City’s design and development guidelines for public neighborhood parks.** This can be accomplished through the planning and development review process. Private parks are sometimes turned over to city governments for operations and maintenance if a development no longer wishes relinquish liability and maintenance responsibilities. If the private park does not meet public park standards, the City should not acquire the property as it would assume ownership of a site requiring substantial capital investments (e.g., lacking new playground equipment, heavy invasive weed infestation, accessibility improvements, etc.) among other long-term problems. This is a developmental issue should be carefully planned during the conceptual design phase of the private neighborhood park to bring it in line with specific needs suggested in this document.

- **Implement the recommended park improvements and new facilities recommended in this Plan.** Detailed recommendations on improvements at existing parks and facilities, development of new parks and facilities, and establishment of a trail system are contained within Appendix D with recommended implementation phasing in Chapter 5.
- **Incorporate citizen input into park and facility designs.** Designs for parks and facilities should be tailored to the needs of the neighborhood and park users. Opportunities for citizen input should be incorporated into the design process through the use of workshops, public open houses, questionnaires, and other techniques.
- **Continue to develop a comprehensive and inter-connected off-street trail system that provides connectivity to destinations throughout Washougal and to surrounding destinations for bicyclists and pedestrians.** Through the City's Transportation Capital Facilities Plan and related Port and County planning, the City has adopted plans for improving the non-motorized, active transportation system in and around the City. Future updates to the Transportation Capital Facilities Plan should include an update to potential non-motorized transportation routes in coordination with trail corridors envisioned in this Plan.

- **Continue to support a water trail system:** To capitalize on Washougal's unique water resources, the City should promote a water trail for non-motorized watercraft on the Washougal River. The link could provide information on launch points, site facilities, and points of interest for the river



visitors. Improving floater and kayak access to the Washougal River is a key step in developing usable water trails. While several internet websites currently offer water trail maps for the Columbia River, information regarding public access points for the Washougal River has been difficult to find until 2010.

- **Evaluate the recreation potential of open space sites.** The City of Washougal owns several properties that do not function as parks. These properties consist of remnants left over from subdivision developments “dedicated to the City of Washougal” because of tributaries and associated riparian zones. The City has many open space areas that are potential candidates for rehabilitation under Parks Division management. Some of these future projects may require a plat alteration in order for any proposed project to go into construction. These areas are desirable for the City because of their connectivity opportunities. Appropriate Open Space Areas could be developed into a variety of public uses including trails, playgrounds, future parks, wildlife observation areas, etc. Easements hold great possibility for connecting larger trail systems together. A more thorough analysis of the useable easements would reveal this potential. These suggestions are starting points in the discussion on how open spaces could be used in the future.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

- **Budget at least \$5,000 per acre per year for the maintenance of developed park acreage.** Over time it can be expected the City budget will have its shortfalls. One of the first services usually cut is park maintenance. While cuts to maintenance can occur for a short duration, extended reduced maintenance results in the eventual degradation or even loss of assets and infrastructure. The cost to bring property back to an acceptable level then becomes a significant expense. The City should establish a minimum threshold for park maintenance services at \$5,000 for each developed acre. After several years, the actual cost can be re-evaluated. This figure is exclusive of major capital renovation and repairs.
- **Establish detailed task tracking for employees.** Staff time should be tracked by major maintenance tasks and by site. The City of Washougal’s planned upgrades to computer software will simplify the process of project tracking on timecards. This information can be used in the maintenance management plan and to formulate budgets.
- **Establish performance standards.** Performance standards should be established for every basic park maintenance task. This will clarify what tasks are expected and the general amount of time required. This is an effective tool when budget cuts occur so that everyone knows what level of maintenance will occur in the future.
- **Establish a tiered approach for park maintenance.** Maintenance tiers provide the City with guidance on how much maintenance each facility will require, allowing them to allocate and plan for budget appropriately. By

approaching park and facility maintenance on a systematic basis, crisis maintenance can be reduced, the quality of maintenance improved, and work tasks spread out more evenly over the year. This type of approach also helps the City track and compare maintenance costs of each park and pertinent tasks. Accurate evaluation of maintenance levels and costs result in informed judgments regarding paring costs. Below is an outline of the levels used to assess maintenance requirements of each of Washougal's outdoor facilities.

- > Level 1: This highest level of maintenance is typically performed at large community parks or sites that receive the highest use. Maintenance at this level maintains the park or facility at a standard sufficient to ensure a well-kept appearance. Public plazas, sports fields, shelters, and restrooms are visited daily and maintenance concerns are given a high priority.
 - > Level 2: This level of maintenance is performed at improved properties that may include play equipment and irrigated turf. Maintenance at this level ensures the park remains clean and safe, while forgoing more specialized and customized care. Maintenance issues and concerns are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with safety items receiving highest priority.
 - > Level 3: This level of maintenance is performed in less developed areas that include asphalt or chip trails, has low or transitory use, signage and no little to no irrigation. Sites are visited periodically with the more developed areas being mowed and blown as needed. Maintenance issues and concerns are often initiated by inspections and citizen concerns, with safety issues receiving highest priority.
 - > Level 4: This lowest level of maintenance is performed in undeveloped park properties that may or may not have adjacent development. All properties are non-irrigated. Maintenance should be provided to address hazardous or unsafe conditions and respond to concerns identified by citizens or through periodic inspections. Occasional spikes in maintenance will occur during habitat restoration activities and for hazard tree issues.
- **Consider alternative maintenance arrangements to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.** Seasonal employees and interns provide an alternative way of maintaining parks during peak seasons. A larger ratio of seasonal employees can help meet the increase maintenance demands in a more cost-efficient manner. Other opportunities exist with multi-jurisdictional partnerships such as GEM, utilizing organizations such as

AmeriCorps, and/or continuing the use of corrections crews and volunteers as previously mentioned.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

- **Continue collaborating with the School District for programs and create a dedicated recreation coordinator position.** The City should continue to work with the School District to provide a range of public programs. The City currently does not provide recreation programs, a direction this Plan recommends pursuing. A dedicated recreation staff person will be needed to establish pilot programs and recruit partners, coordinate with the School District and other agencies, and contract providers to offer programs in parks.
- **Transition to a parks and recreation department over time.** Many cities find that a single department or division addressing all aspects of parks and recreation allows for better and more efficient services and operations. Washougal should strategically transition to a parks and recreation department (similar to the structure in the neighboring City of Camas) to facilitate parks and recreation services, allow for better coordination with other providers, and improve cost tracking.
- **Solicit new program providers that require minimal City resources.** There are a range of private providers that can offer programs and activities in Washougal with little or no obligation to the City. Providers such as Soccer Shots soccer programs or Skyhawks sports camps and clinics serve nearby recreation agencies and are good resource to quickly build recreation programming locally.
- **Recruit community volunteers to lead community events.** Local volunteers are a great resource that can help build or expand some types of community events and programs. Activities such as movies or concerts in the park, active adult outings and events, and other similar opportunities can all be organized with minimal cost to the City.
- **Establish/expand sponsor and partnership programs.** Expanding the City's programming options creates new opportunities to engage and excite sponsors. For each programming area added or expanded, there is a likely community partner that could bring funding to the table. For example, health and fitness programming, from classes in parks to engaging employee fitness programs, would be an on-brand for health care providers or insurance companies.
- **Hold City-sponsored events in parks to showcase the park system and build awareness.** The City should increase awareness of the public park and recreation system by holding fun and family-friendly events in parks.

Activities such as live music, food, temporary games and activities can attract new users, build social and neighborhood cohesion and bolster future supporters of parks and recreation.

- **Test a variety of program options for different ages and abilities.** Use pilot programs and a recreation program review tool to test and evaluate the success of a variety of programs, events, classes, and activities. Programming should meet the needs of Washougal residents, and there should be a diverse range of options to accommodate differing interests, time availability, and abilities.
- **Establish a fees-and-charges philosophy.** Develop a fee schedule for programs. The fees-and-charges philosophy will guide the setting of fees, as well as the cost recovery goals. In general, fees for programs that provide high individual benefit and low community benefit are set to recover all costs or even turn a profit, while programs with high community benefit are highly subsidized. In addition, the fees-and charges philosophy should address scholarships and affordability to ensure access.
- **Establish cost recovery goals for each major program area.** Cost tracking of recreation programs provides data to inform management, marketing, or programming improvements, while ensuring that Washougal is meeting community recreation needs while maintaining a solid financial footing. As an added benefit, accurate cost tracking also provides information for budgeting and for planning future facilities. To evaluate programming based on costs, Washougal should establish a cost tracking system that accurately reflects the costs of services offered and the revenues generated by each service area. The revenue and costs can then be compared to assess performance of recreation programs. Costs that should be attributed to each program area include direct costs (supplies, etc.), the fees for the contractor who provides the program, room rental, facility or field maintenance, recreation coordinator, and Recreation Division administration. Some agencies charge a share of administration time to different program areas as part of identifying the actual cost of services.
- **Once programs are provided, institute program evaluation protocols.** Programs should be evaluated in terms of cost, revenue, participation levels, and user feedback. User evaluation methods should be developed (questionnaires offered after classes, internet comment forms, etc.) and implemented, and the results should be reviewed regularly. Participation should be tracked, and participation rates should be reviewed regularly so that programming can be adjusted to meet demands. Cost and revenue generation of each major program area should be reviewed annually.



Schmid Fields (Credit: Dawn Feldhaus/Post-Record)

5. Future Park System and Implementation

Creating the future park system requires a phased approach to completing capital projects and integrating the new services necessary to implement the Plan. This chapter provides an overview of the future parks system and associated projects and services. Additional details are presented in Appendix C (capital project list) and Appendix D (site improvements).

FUTURE PARK SYSTEM

The envisioned future park and recreation system reflects the key needs and vision voiced by the community, with specific projects identified for existing parks as well as potential future parks. The Future Park System Map, shown on the next page, shows the distribution of recommended projects in five general categories summarized below.

Park Reinvestment



As noted in the park assessment and evaluation of community needs, many existing parks need renovations. Capital reinvestment is recommended in nine parks. Park reinvestment projects include replacing aging or damaged park features, such as the restroom at Hamllik Park, and adding new features, such as a covered event venue at Hartwood Park.

Park Development



There are several recently dedicated parks or sites that are actively undergoing development. The School District and City are completing sports field and site improvements at George Schmid Memorial Park. Private developers will be completing park improvements at Granite Highlands Park and Ninebark Park. This category also includes continued development of the Downtown Park and Community Garden site that Washougal purchased in 2016.

Future Parks



Based on the previous plan, future community needs and the park gap assessment, this Plan recommends four new parks. Map 4 shows the general locations of two future neighborhood parks (NP1 and NP2), one future community park (CP), and one future waterfront park (WP). The actual location will be determined based on land availability, acquisition costs, a site's consistency with park development standards, and the property owner's willingness to negotiate.

Future Trails



An interconnected trail system is a major priority for the future park and recreation system. Map 4 identifies proposed trail routes. While general routes are shown on the map, the actual trail alignment or right-of-way will be determined based on land availability. The off-street trail system focuses on recreation opportunities while also serving non-motorized transportation needs. Washougal's trail system will connect all parts of the city to each other, with linkages to downtown and important recreation facilities.

Site Divestment



The park condition assessment found that some small parks are not contributing towards the parks and recreation vision. Beaver Park, Riverview Park, and Lookout Ridge 3 (Tracts A and B) require City maintenance but are underused or do not have potential to meet park design and development standards. Based on current conditions, the City should consider transferring ownership of these sites.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The total cost of developing and maintaining the system is critical to plan implementation and the build-out of the system. Table 10 summarizes the general order-of-magnitude costs to assist in evaluating and prioritizing projects for future consideration in City budgeting. A detailed version of the capital projects, cost estimates and costing assumptions for existing and proposed parks can be found in Appendix C.



Map 4: Future Park System

Existing Parks (2021)

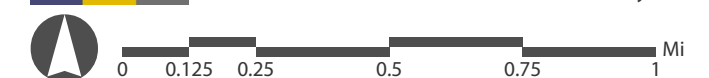
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Open Space
- Special Use Site
- Pocket Park
- Waterfront Park
- Other

Recommendations

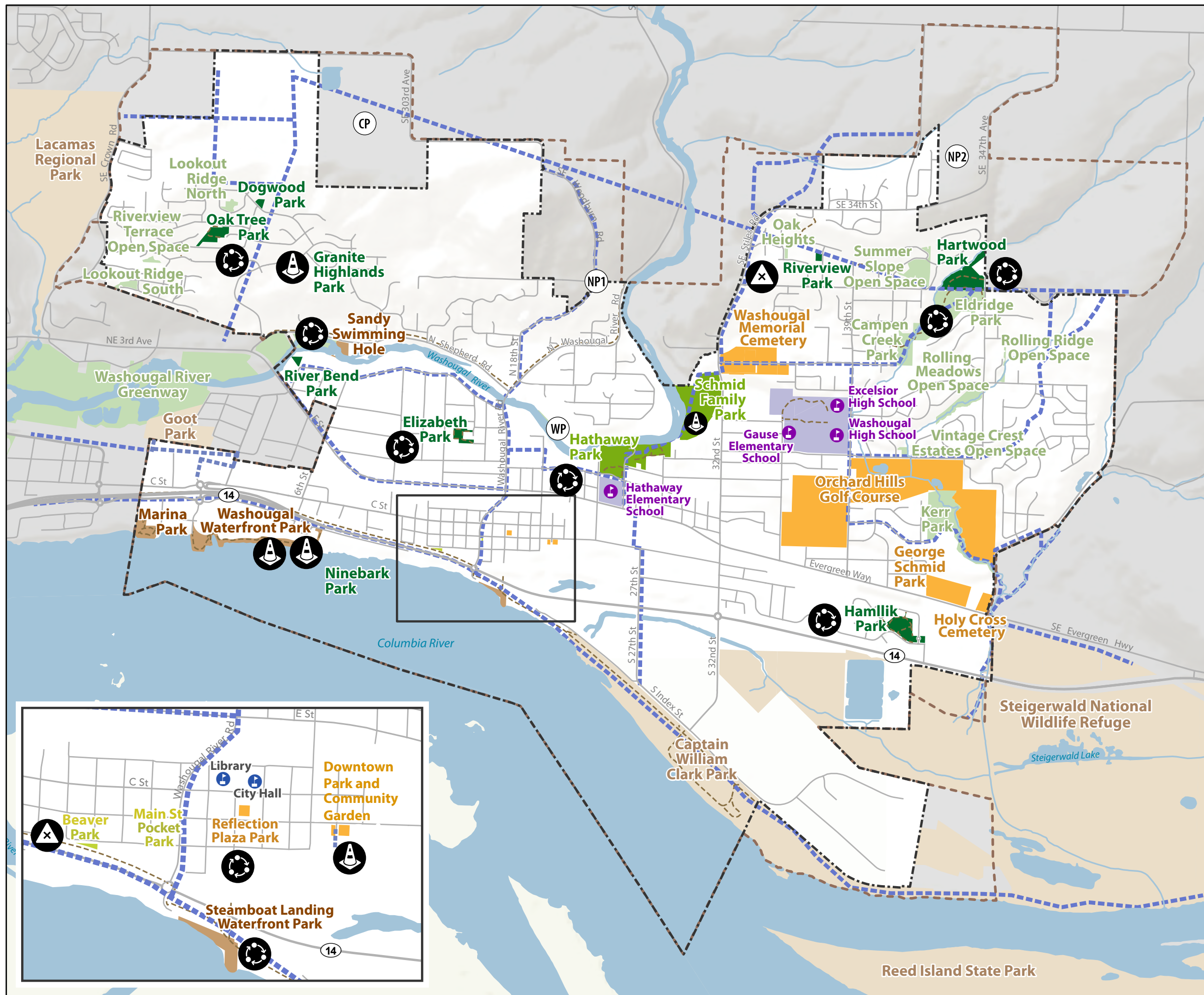
- Future Park
- Future Trail Corridor
- Park Development
- Park Reinvestment
- Site Divestment

Basemap Features

- Trail
- School
- Water Feature
- City of Washougal
- Urban Growth Area
- Clark County



Source: Clark County
Date: January 2021



In total, approximately \$18.3 million would be needed to implement all capital improvements to existing parks, as detailed in Appendix D. Another significant cost for Plan implementation is associated with providing new parks and facilities. An additional \$11.6 million would be needed for the development of six new parks, two new trails, a community garden and off-leash dog area.

TABLE 10: TOTAL PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECT AND REINVESTMENT/REPLACEMENT COSTS

	Inventory Total		Total Costs	
	#	Acres/ Miles	Total Capital Costs	Total Capital Reinvestment/ Replacement Cost (annual)
Neighborhood Parks	5	17.6	\$3,637,000	\$33,160
Community Parks	2	33.6	\$12,236,000	\$134,440
Special Use Areas	5	18.2	\$680,000	\$8,360
Waterfront Parks	2	2.5	\$1,417,000	\$8,280
Natural Parks	2	19.9	\$352,000	-
Existing Parks Total	15	91.4	\$18,322,000	\$184,240
New Parks*	6	18.9	\$10,750,000	\$57,880
New Trails**	2	1.3	\$318,000	-
Other New Facilities*	2	2.5	\$550,000	\$5,000
New Parks and Facilities Total*	11	25.4	\$11,618,000	\$62,880

Source: MIG. Notes: Does not include capital costs for parks currently under development.

* General acreage assumptions provided. Actual acreage may vary.

** General trail mileage assumption provided. Actual mileage may vary.

Capital Reinvestment and Replacement

Unlike capital or maintenance costs, reinvestment/replacement costs represent annual investments to take care of the park system in the future. Park reinvestment costs reflect an amount that should be set aside annually so that the City has sufficient funds on hand to repair or replace outdated or worn facilities as scheduled based on their age and use. While these funds are not needed immediately, these monies are critical to ensuring the long-term use of the park system.

Project Phasing

The goals of this Plan, along with input from the public, Park Board members, and staff, were combined to help prioritize projects. All capital projects were sorted into three general priorities or time periods.

- **Priority I:** Projects should be recommended to include in the capital improvement list immediately and implemented within six years.
- **Priority II:** Projects are less urgent or require additional work to prepare for implementation, such as the completion of a master plan.
- **Priority III:** Projects should continue to be considered but would require a special opportunity or the completion of the higher priority projects before they are actively considered.

Improvements to existing parks are higher priority; this Plan recommends implementing these projects in the next six years. Some facilities, such as an event venue at Hartwood Park, are considered Priority II because they would require additional funding and time to complete. All new parks, facilities and trails will be based on opportunities, new development or other unknown factors that could take longer to implement. Table 11 shows general phasing of the capital project list. Appendix D provides more detailed site and facility recommendations.

TABLE 11: SITE AND FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS AND PHASING

	Priority I	Priority II	Priority III
	1-6 years	7-12 years	12+ years
Existing Parks			
Campen Creek and Eldridge Park			
Elizabeth Park			
Hamlik Park			
Hartwood Park			
Hathaway Park			
Kerr Park			
Oak Tree Park			
Reflection Plaza			
Sandy Swimming Hole			
Downtown Park and Community Garden			
Schmid Family Park			
Skatepark			

	Priority I	Priority II	Priority III
	1-6 years	7-12 years	12+ years
Steamboat Landing			
Future Parks, Trails and Facilities			
Off-leash dog area			
Community Garden			
Future Community Park (CP)			
Future Neighborhood Park 1 (NP1)			
Future Neighborhood Park 2 (NP2)			
Future Waterfront Park (WP)			
Columbia River Trail			
Jemtegaard School Trail			

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Diversify Funding Sources

The City of Washougal primarily relies on the General Fund to pay for parks and recreation. As Washougal increases its park and recreation services, careful attention to financing and budgeting will ensure that the City meets community recreation needs while maintaining a solid financial footing. Washougal should continue to pursue outside funding sources, while diversifying its strategy to pay for system-wide improvements, operations and maintenance. At a minimum, the City should pursue the following:

- Leverage the Plan to pursue grant funding:** Grants are a major source of public funding, yet the application, matching, management and reporting requirements keep grants from being truly free money. With many granting entities, the proven ability to maintain projects once they are in the ground is a growing focus. Washougal should monitor grant opportunities (including decision criteria, deadlines and requirements) and look for alignment with the direction of this Plan before deciding to move forward with application. This will result in efficient use of the necessary staff time and target grants at the highest priority and most likely opportunities. The Additional Funding Sources section provides a more detailed list of options to support system improvements, operations and/or maintenance.
- Collaborate on interdepartmental project design and funding:** Economic development initiatives, streets, stormwater and other public utilities can all be linked to parks and recreation. The City should continue to discuss potential projects that offer multiple benefits. For example, a water or sewer

project could also provide opportunities to collocate park and green infrastructure projects to coincide with design, construction, and ongoing maintenance.

- **Update Park Impact Fees:** The City of Washougal is updating its park impact fee in conjunction with this Plan. The updated methodology and fee schedule will be supported by the capital projects list identified in this Plan. Washington State law allows for jurisdictions to charge impact fees so that new development helps pay a portion of the costs associated with building new capital facilities required to serve the needs of growth. The future park system in the City of Washougal is intended to serve residents, businesses and their employees and visitors. As parks are a resource for all members of the community, impact fees can be charged for all types of development.
- **Implement a park utility fee:** A park utility fee is a monthly user fee that a city charges through utility bills, similar to other public utilities such as water/sewer. Revenue collected through the fee can then be used to help pay for needed park maintenance. Approved through a vote by the City Council, utility fees can also be phased in, potentially increasing slightly each year.
- **Adopt facility reservation and user fees:** The City does not currently charge a fee for reserving park shelters and sports fields. Fees generated from use of these facilities could help offset some costs for needed site improvements, as well as support administrative costs related to scheduling and reservations. The City is currently evaluating the potential to charge fees. If the City decides to charge fees, City Staff should outline their fee philosophy communicate the decision, as well as develop policies to manage and administer the fee schedule.

2. Employ Strategic Communications on Recovery and Plan Implementation

Recovery from the global pandemic and gradual reopening of parks and programs will require a coordinated public communications and engagement strategy. There are two parts to the recommended communication strategy. First, communication about the values of parks and recreation and the full range of services provided by the City will be invaluable for increasing park use and long-term support, especially when parks reopen. The City should begin with a contact list of liaisons to existing organizations to serve as ambassadors or community organizers to help connect with underrepresented populations in Washougal. A public information campaign should be employed that provides information about the Park & Recreation Plan and that highlights what the City is doing to meet needs. The City's new recreation program guide would be a great resource to convey this message. Second, the City will find it valuable to test potential funding packages or level of support for funding

increases through public input, education, outreach and polling before any specific voter-approved funding mechanism, such as a park district, is put on a ballot.

3. Update Maintenance Expenditures Using a Tiered System

The City should apply a tiered maintenance system to the park system. Park maintenance is a critical ingredient of the park and recreation system and a big part of City services and resource needs. General grounds maintenance and mowing account for the bulk of maintenance workload. With increasing demand and a growing system, Washougal is faced with prioritizing where to spend the maintenance budget. Appendix C identifies the recommended maintenance tier for existing and new parks and facilities.



Table 12 summarizes maintenance costs that are based on the recommended tiered levels for maintenance. Costs are based on an increase to the City's existing approximate annual average cost to maintain developed park land (\$5,000 per acre) and an increase or decrease in average costs based on the recommended maintenance level for each site. Using the tiered maintenance structure, the annual maintenance cost for all existing parks and facilities would total \$564,800. An additional \$183,500 would be needed to maintain new parks, trails and facilities annually.

TABLE 12: TOTAL PROPOSED MAINTENANCE COSTS

	Inventory Total		Total Maintenance Cost (Average Annual)
	#	Acres/ Miles	
Neighborhood Parks	5	17.6	\$127,200
Community Parks	2	33.6	\$336,100
Special Use Areas	5	18.2	\$49,900
Waterfront Parks	2	2.5	\$23,100
Natural Parks	2	19.9	\$28,500

	Inventory Total		Total Maintenance Cost (Average Annual)
	#	Acres/ Miles	
Existing Parks Total	16	91.8	\$564,800
New Parks*	6	18.9	\$154,700
New Trails**	2	1.3	\$12,500
Other New Facilities*	2	2.5	\$16,300
New Parks and Facilities Total	11	25.4	\$183,500

Source: MIG. Notes: * General acreage assumptions provided. Actual acreage may vary. ** General trail mileage assumption provided. Actual mileage may vary.

4. Monitor Plan Implementation and Revisit Priorities

The implementation of this Plan will continue well past the six-year update cycle, as noted in the project prioritization and phasing. Following the adoption of this Plan, City staff and the Park Board should monitor plan progress and completion of priority projects. There are factors that may limit the ability to move forward on any one project but each high priority site could have recommendation elements that can be moved forward. Working with the Park Board, the City should revisit the project list biannually, ahead of the budgeting process, to reevaluate progress and priorities and adjust for new opportunities.

Staff should use the following criteria to evaluate different projects in individual sites, as well as any new projects or opportunities that surface in the future. These criteria stem from community priorities that emerged through the planning process and should continue to guide decision making and prioritizing new investments. A project is prioritized based on how well it achieves one or more of the following criteria:

- **Reinvests in existing parks:** Results of the community survey indicated that residents place a high priority on improving existing parks, bringing existing parks up to current standards, and adding restrooms and shelters to already owned parks.
- **Improves river access:** Utilizing land with river front access or easements, access improvements, and riverfront trails are important for Washougal residents and for promoting recreation and riparian stewardship.

- **Improves connectivity:** Trail-related activities are some of the most popular forms of recreation in Washougal, and trails also provide a means for residents to experience the city's natural resources. Completing the trail network and developing trail support promoting more walking opportunities.
- **Improves park access in underserved and developing areas:** Maintaining equity in the park system is a community priority, so that all residents have similar access to parks and facilities. Analyzing distance and location of local park resources, and identifying areas lacking in these facilities and experiences.
- **Promotes economic development:** Park and recreation projects that enhance Washougal's position as a town center, attract visitors and create a positive environment for businesses and their employees should be prioritized.
- **Contributes to partnership opportunities.** Washougal residents are supportive of partnering with Camas and others to improve recreation access for the community.
- **Divests in non-contributing sites:** Washougal could surplus a property, either selling or donating it to another user. This would reduce the operating impacts to the City and reduce the need for future capital projects at the center.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

There are a number of options the City could consider for funding improvements. The list that follows represents both capital and operations funding sources. Adding these to the City's funding mix would help further diversify revenues to invest in the park and recreation system.

General Obligation Bond

These are voter approved bonds paid off by an assessment placed on real property. The money may only be used for capital improvements. This property tax is



levied for a specified period of time (usually 15-20 years) and passage requires a 60% approval. Major disadvantages of this funding option are the voter approval requirement and the interest costs.

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)

This is a tax levied on all real estate sales and is levied against the full value of the property. Washougal is allowed under the statutes to levy 0.5% in addition to the State of Washington tax. These funds can only be used for projects identified in the Capital Facilities Plan Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. REET funds in Washougal are currently budgeted largely for downtown improvement projects.

Metropolitan Park District

A Metropolitan Park District can provide dedicated funding for parks and recreation. When cities provide park and recreation services, there are a number of competing priorities for General Fund resources, including public safety. A park district has a dedicated revenue stream that can only be used for park and recreation purposes. Washington permits the formation of a metropolitan park district to provide park and recreation facilities, if the district is approved by voters. Once approved, the district can establish a permanent tax base. Because of the subsequent taxing authority, formation of a district is a funding mechanism worthy of exploration in Washougal. Formation of a district may be initiated by the local governing body or by citizen petition. If a proposed district includes multiple jurisdictions, the governing bodies of each jurisdiction must adopt a resolution. For example, if a district were proposed that included City of Washougal land and unincorporated Clark County land, both the City of Washougal and the Clark Board of Commissioners would need to adopt a resolution submitting a ballot proposition to establish the district. If a district was proposed that included only City of Washougal land, the Washougal City Council could adopt a resolution submitting a ballot proposition to establish the district.

Clark County Legacy Lands Program

The Legacy Lands program (Clark County's Conservation Futures Program) protects these lands highly valued for habitat, scenic corridors, low-impact recreation and other qualities that enhance our local environment. The Legacy Lands program is guided by several key documents that were developed with local partners and stakeholders. The program targets key conservation properties and areas for conservation and protection.

Donations

The donation of labor, land or cash by service agencies, private groups or individuals is a popular way to raise small amounts of money for specific projects.

One common example is a service club, such as Kiwanis, Lions or Rotary, funding playground improvements.

Exchange of Property

The proposed park system includes the divestment or sale of several sites that the City currently maintains. Proceeds or savings from these sites can then be redirected to support park maintenance in other parks or recreation resources.

Public/Private Partnership

This concept has become increasingly popular for park and recreation agencies. The basic approach is for a public agency to enter into a working agreement with a private corporation to help fund, build and/or operate a public facility. Generally, the three primary incentives a public agency can offer are land to place a facility (usually a park or other parcel of public land), certain tax advantages, and access to the facility. While the public agency may have to give up certain responsibilities or control of other recreation services and amenities, it is one way of obtaining public facilities at a lower cost.

Estate Giving

A variety of arrangements to accept donations for park and recreation as an element of an estate. One example of this would be a Lifetime Estate: an agreement between the City and a landowner, where the City acquires the property but gives the owner the right to live on the site after the property transfer in exchange for the estate maintaining the property or for other agreed upon services.

Land Trusts

Private land trusts, such as the Trust for Public Land, Inc. and the Nature Conservancy will acquire and hold land for eventual acquisition by a public agency. In some cases, repayment of acquisition funds, including interest, may be required.

Shared Facilities

In some situations, other services provided in the city, or in private utilities, may be able to share the cost of improvements that would benefit the parks, recreation and natural areas system. One example is utility corridors; in many cases land used for sanitary sewer, water or power lines may make an excellent trail corridor. In this situation, the utility may pay to develop a service road that can also serve as a trail.

Recreation Conservation Office Grants

Following the City's own resources, the largest funding source for park and recreation projects are competitive grants from the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The RCO is responsible for administering a wide

variety of public funds and provides technical assistance and policy development in addition to preparing statewide plans on trails, boating facilities, habitat preservation and off-road vehicles. It is important to note that most grant programs require a portion of the project cost to be provided by a local partner as match funding.

No Child Left Inside

This program provides grant funds for outdoor environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based education and recreation programs serving youth. The grant program is divided into three tiers, with Tier 1 providing a minimum of \$5,000 and Tier 3 providing a maximum of \$150,000. Tier 2 and 3 projects have a match requirement of 25 percent.

Salmon Recovery Funding Board

Salmon recovery grants are awarded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, from state and federal sources, to protect and restore salmon habitat. The board funds projects that protect existing, high quality habitats for salmon and that restore degraded habitat to increase overall habitat health and biological productivity. The board also awards grants for feasibility assessments to determine future projects and for other salmon related activities. Projects may include the actual habitat used by salmon and the land and water that support ecosystem functions and processes important to salmon. The program funds acquisition, restoration, design and non-capital projects with no project funding limit. Local agencies are required to match 15 percent of grant funds except for design-only projects.

Community Development Block Grants

These grants from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development are available for a wide variety of projects. Most are used for projects in lower income areas of the community because of funding rules. Grants can cover up to 100 percent of project costs.

Federal Transportation Funding

Federal transportation funding, including the year-long extension of the FAST Act in 2020, funds surface transportation across the country using a combination of federal funding, primarily the gas tax. One of the funding programs is a block grant to states that includes set-aside funding for Transportation Alternatives. This funding can be applied to a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USFWS may provide technical assistance and administer funding for projects related to water quality improvement through debris and habitat/ vegetation management, watershed management and stream bank erosion, and sediment deposition projects.

Private Grants and Foundations

Private corporations and foundations provide money for a wide range of projects, targeted to the organizations' mission. Some foundations do not provide grants to governments but will often grant to partner organizations. Private grants can be difficult to secure because of the open competition and the up-front investment in research and relationship building.