



CHAPTER FIVE

PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

What you will find in this chapter:

- A description of how and why parks and recreation facilities are planned;
- A discussion of existing conditions and trends impacting parks and recreation services;
- A discussion of current and proposed approaches to measuring Levels of Service; and
- Goals and policies related to the provision of parks and recreation facilities.

Purpose Statement:

Practice responsible stewardship of parks, significant open spaces, recreational facilities and corridors to provide active and passive recreational opportunities for all persons in the community.

Purpose

Although the Parks and Recreation Element is a newer requirement under the Growth Management Act, Kent has long maintained a park and open space element, because park and recreational opportunities are viewed as an integral part of the City and essential to the quality of life for its residents.

The Parks and Recreation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan is intended as an overview of the City's planning efforts related to the provision of parks and recreation facilities. It, combined with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, describes the City's goals and priorities in a general way.

The Comprehensive Plan is a useful and mandated city planning document; it is supplemented by a number of other city planning efforts, including the Park and Open Space Plan (P&OS Plan). The P&OS Plan fleshes out the basic policies covered in this Parks and Recreation Element, as it can go into far greater detail. It is also updated on a different schedule than the Comprehensive Plan. The last P&OS Plan update was adopted in 2016.



Issues

Decreasing Resources

For reasons discussed in detail elsewhere in this Plan, the City continues to face revenue shortfalls. These shortfalls have hit parks capital funds hard, exacerbating a capital maintenance backlog that had begun long before the 2008 recession.

Aging Infrastructure

Each category of park asset has a typical expected lifetime, along with its own typical amount of routine maintenance and typical amount of capital maintenance. The latest park amenity inventory indicated that 71 percent of Kent's parks have at least one amenity that is near or at the end of its useful life. That translates to a capital maintenance backlog of over \$60 million.

Changing Demographics

Kent's population is growing and changing. The park system needs to respond to those changes in order to remain relevant to its community.

Change In Recreational Trends

Recreational trends have changed and continue to change. As the City focuses on renovation of its existing facilities, they need to respond better to changes in recreational trends in order to remain relevant to the community.

Change In Focus

With the City's lower revenues, the fact that a percentage of that revenue is going toward debt retirement and the aging park infrastructure, the primary focus for the Parks capital program has been on redevelopment, or, what we're calling "making better use of what we have."



Parks Planning In Kent

The Parks and Recreation Element works in concert with the Park and Open Space (P&OS) Plan, which provides direction for the planning, acquisition, development and renovation of parks, open space and recreational facilities. The P&OS Plan was updated in 2016.

Since the previous update of the P&OS Plan, fiscal realities for many local governments have changed significantly. Kent has been no exception. While we still aspire to a system that provides a high level of service to the community, our current budget realities require an entirely new approach to planning and maintaining our park system.

Built on great bones, Kent's park system was forged through thoughtful planning and community commitment. Over the past several years, investment into the park system has waned, and many park amenities are aging and in need of repair or replacement. During the economic recovery of the last few years, the City has managed to make a number of improvements to its park system. Recent projects include an expanded playground at Lake Meridian Park (2011); new playground and park improvements at Tudor Square Park (2012), Turnkey Park (2013) and Green Tree Park (2014); planting improvements at Service Club Ballfields (2013); the replacement of synthetic turf at Wilson Sports Fields (2014), the addition of exercise equipment to West Fenwick Park (2015) and trail improvements at the Riverview property (2015). With considerable assistance from grants, the City has also managed to make some significant strategic acquisitions: the Huse, Matinjussi and Van Dyke properties in the Panther Lake area (2012); and continued assemblage at Clark Lake Park (2013) and Morrill Meadows Park (2014).

All the property acquisitions and several of the park improvements were funded either entirely or primarily through grants. The playground improvements also benefited from the use of in-house labor and contributions made by volunteers.

The use of in-house labor, grants and volunteers can certainly help leverage limited financial resources, but it's simply not feasible to rely heavily on these sources for the basic renovations and improvements needed to keep a park system vibrant and relevant to its community.

The Role of Parks and Open Space in the City

Parks and open space contribute to a healthy, livable city in multiple ways. We know that people value parks and open space for the opportunity to walk a dog, learn to ride a bike, play organized sports, explore a trail or engage in a wide variety of other recreational activities. These activities lead to positive health benefits by providing contact with nature, along with opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. Well-designed and maintained parks also contribute to the economic development of a community by providing popular amenities that people look for when deciding where they want to live and work. Healthy open space provides habitat, cleans the air and absorbs storm water run-off.

Relationship to Other Plans

Recreation and Conservation Funding Board's Manual 2

The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, or RCO, is a state agency tasked with distributing a number of state and federal grant funds. These grant funds are dedicated to the acquisition, development and redevelopment of recreational facilities across Washington state.

Eligibility for these funds is based, in part, on having a state-approved parks comprehensive plan, which must be updated every six years. Kent's 2010 Parks and Open Space Plan met the state's requirement and, as a result, qualified Kent to receive the \$1,809,959 it has received in RCO funding since 2010. The 2016 update sets up the City for the next cycles of RCO funding opportunities.

Because the P&OS plan is related to the Parks and Recreation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan, the RCO's grant requirements impact not only the contents of the P&OS plan but also those of the Parks and Recreation Element.

Washington's 2013 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Washington's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, commonly referred to as SCORP, provides a statewide look at recreation, with a focus on recreation on public lands. It examines trends in recreation, identifies current issues and sets recommendations for ways to improve outdoor recreation in the state. It also sets the priorities for RCO funding. To receive RCO funding, a project must be consistent with the goals laid out in SCORP.

Public Outreach

City staff, assisted by the newly formed Parks Commission, reached out to the public over the summer of 2015 in a variety of ways, as they prepared the update of the Park & Open Space Plan. Staff and Commissioners attended several community events, and invited attendees to participate in an informal survey about the park system. They handed out hundreds of reminder cards with the web address of the on-line survey, in order to make taking the survey as convenient as possible. The survey was framed around the question, "What do parks do for you?" It asked participants how they use the parks and what their priorities for their local parks are. A total of 225 people filled out the survey.

A second, more formal, survey was mailed to randomly selected residents in late summer. That survey was designed to provide statistically valid results, and was done by a professional survey consulting firm. That survey received 603 responses.

The informal survey served as an initial parks plan-related conversation with Kent residents that provided lots of opportunity for in-depth comments. It contained a large number of open-ended questions, and its online presence helped people feel free to spend as much time on their answers as they wanted. The formal survey that followed asked much more focused questions, but had the advantage of being structured so that its results were statistically valid. The combination of surveys provided a much broader array of input than either one alone could have provided.

The surveys showed people generally feel good about the park system, tend to use the park nearest where they live and expressed a willingness to fund capital maintenance and park upgrades with tax dollars. The full results of both surveys are included in the P&OS Plan.

Administration of the Parks Element and its Policies

Policy that guides the funding and operation of Kent's park system is administered by the Director of the Kent Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. Policy direction is set by the three-member Parks Committee of the Kent City Council. The City's 16-member Parks Commission advises the Council on most park- and recreation-related matters. The City's 12-member Arts Commission, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by Council, advises the Council and approves public art and cultural programming.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Every large planning effort needs to consider its context. Part of doing so involves analyzing and accounting for current and anticipated trends. This effort is no exception. Significant trends in Kent, and their impact on parks and recreational facility planning, include decreasing resources, aging infrastructure and changing demographics.

Decreasing Resources

The City continues to face revenue shortfalls. These shortfalls have hit parks capital funds hard, exacerbating a capital maintenance backlog that had begun long before the 2008 recession. During the parks facilities assessment work that was last updated in 2012, the City's parks capital maintenance backlog was determined to be over \$60 million. Based on a recent update of the Park Asset Inventory, that backlog has continued to grow. One of the larger questions addressed in the 2016 Park & Open Space Plan is how to respond to this trend. Options include identifying new sources of revenue, partnering with other agencies and organizations and adjusting the size of the park system.

Aging Infrastructure

Kent's park system has a long and proud history. Kent's first park, Rosebed Park, was opened in 1906. Over 100 years later, our system continues to receive good reviews, locally and nationally. One indication of our reputation is that we consistently attract regional and national athletic tournaments because players enjoy playing on our well-maintained grass fields.

What's the difference between routine maintenance and capital maintenance?

Most people are aware that many cities, including Kent, have park maintenance employees on their staff. These employees are generally responsible for:

- Routine maintenance tasks, including such things as mowing grass, cleaning restrooms and emptying trash.
- Minor construction projects, such as making repairs to plumbing and roofs and filling in potholes in parking lots, as well as repairing pathways and trails in the parks.

This work is considered routine maintenance and is funded through the city's operations budget.

Larger projects, such as building a new restroom building, repaving a park's parking lot, or replacing worn-out athletic fields' synthetic turf, are considered capital maintenance projects, are contracted out to construction firms and are paid for through the Parks capital budget.

That reputation is something of which we are proud. Unfortunately, not all of our assets have aged as well as some of our grass fields. Even at our most popular sports field sites, there are assets that are in desperate need of re-investment. For example, at Kent Memorial Park, the restroom building is in near-constant need of repair, be it from a leak in the aged roof or problems with the crumbling plumbing system. At Hogan Park (formerly Russell Road Park), the parking lots have been patched so many times that it is getting increasingly difficult to patch the patches.



Each category of park asset has a typical expected lifetime, along with its own typical amount of routine maintenance and typical amount of capital maintenance. The expected lifetime of a restroom building, and the amount of maintenance required to keep it functioning, are entirely different from that of, say, a playground, whose expected lifetime and maintenance are different from that of a grass athletic field. What they all have in common is the fact that they all have finite life expectancies, and they all require continuing investments throughout the course of their lifetimes. Not surprisingly, both routine and capital maintenance costs increase as assets age, with older assets requiring more frequent maintenance than their newer counterparts.

In 2012, Parks updated its Asset Inventory, which assessed the condition of every park asset valued over \$10,000. The analysis looked at 240 assets. The scores ranged from 1 (nearing the end of its useful life) to 5 (functionally new). Seventy-nine assets (32 percent of the total) were ranked 1 or 2. Sixty-three percent of Kent’s parks contained at least one asset ranked 1 or 2. The list was updated again in 2015. It found that 96 assets (40 percent of the total) were ranked 1 or 2, and 71 percent of parks have at least one asset ranked 1 or 2.

The 2012 analysis identified a capital maintenance backlog of over \$60 million. From 2010 through 2014, the City spent approximately \$5.7 million on parks redevelopment projects. At that rate of investment, it would take 52 years to complete the projects on our list of assets waiting to be repaired or replaced.

Changing Demographics

Kent’s population has changed significantly over the past two decades, and continues to change. At the time of the 2010 Parks and Open Space Plan (P&OS Plan) update, the City’s population stood at 88,380. Shortly after the plan was adopted, the City annexed the area known as Panther Lake. Kent’s 2015 official Office of Financial Management population is estimated to be 122,900.

It’s not just the number of residents that has changed. The City has become increasingly racially and culturally diverse.

Kent has an increasing population of foreign-born residents, including a sizeable population who does not speak English. The Kent School District’s website reports that their student population comes from families speaking 137 languages.

In addition, the numbers show that our population is getting older. In 2000, 7.4 percent of Kent’s population was over 65. The 2014 data show that population at 9.4 percent. These changes to Kent’s population reflect the fact that the current City of Kent is not the same as the suburban Kent that the park system was created to serve.

In addition to Kent’s increasing population and diversity, we know that recreation trends are also changing. The Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Executive Summary 2013-2018 observed that, “The most notable increase in participation is for ‘picnicking, barbecuing, and cooking out,’” which went from the ninth-ranked activity in 2002 to the



top-ranked activity in 2012.” The plan documents a number of recreational activities that have significantly increased or decreased in popularity over the past several years.

The above changes will need to guide and inform the reinvestment effort, so that the park system can be transformed in ways that will better suit our changing circumstances.

As the community changes, the City must make changes to how we engage the community in conversations regarding their recreational needs and priorities. The old-style “town hall” type of public meeting isn’t as effective as it used to be. The City continues to look at new and innovative ways to engage residents, in order to get as broad a representation of thoughts and ideas as possible.

Change in Focus

The City’s last period of park facility expansion included the construction of Service Club Ball Fields, Wilson Playfields, Arbor Heights 360 Park and Town Square Plaza. Funds for these projects were provided by councilmanic bonds. The City is still paying on these bonds, with the last of the bonds expected to be paid off by 2024.

With the City’s lower revenues, the fact that a percentage of that revenue is going toward debt retirement and the aging park infrastructure, the primary focus in the past several years for the Parks capital program has been on redevelopment. This approach points to something more than just replacing worn-out assets with identical ones. “Making better use of what we have” reflects the shift to a performance-based focus that prioritizes getting more recreational value out of our park spaces in every redevelopment project. That may mean reconfiguring a worn-out parking lot in a high-use park with a more efficient design that creates more spaces, or it may mean replacing an underused sport court with a different kind of sport court that better addresses current recreation trends. By making better use of what we have, the City can provide more and better recreational opportunities for more users without needing to construct a lot of additional parks. In the 2016 P&OS Plan, additional parks are proposed only in neighborhoods where there are lower concentrations of parks compared to other City neighborhoods.

The Three Legs of the Parks Capital Program “Stool”

A parks capital program is made up of three primary categories, including acquisition, development and redevelopment. All three categories are important, but a budget needs to find the right balance of investment among the three categories that’s appropriate to the system’s needs and the community’s priorities.

“Acquisition” is about obtaining new park land, and is most commonly achieved through purchase of private property. “Development” refers to the design and construction of new parks. “Redevelopment” can include either the refurbishment or replacement of worn-out facilities through capital maintenance or

the re-imagining of park amenities—or even entire parks—based on changes in recreation trends and local demographics.

The City of Kent has been acquiring and developing parks for several decades. It has gotten well behind in its reinvestment into its system. The 2016 P&OS Plan lays out a road map to reimagine the system so that it will be well-positioned to serve the community with a primary focus on redevelopment and a few strategic acquisitions and new parks.

The discussion will be focused very clearly on the park system, the community and what the community’s desires and priorities are for the future of the system.

Park Inventory and Classification

The 2010 P&OS Plan update counted 1,434 acres of park and open space land and 59 parks. The 2016 inventory includes 54 developed parks and a total of 1,095.6 acres of developed and undeveloped land.

The numbers appear to indicate that the system has shrunk, when the City has actually added acres to the park property inventory. What’s the explanation for this seeming contradiction? There are four factors that explain the differing numbers between 2010’s count and today’s.

- a. The City has acquired 72.57 acres of new park land since 2010. These were all strategic acquisitions that contributed to long-term assemblages and system goals.
- b. We have built no new parks since 2010. That park plan update signaled a change in direction from system expansion to a focus on “taking care of what we have.”
- c. During the facilities assessment process the parks department undertook in 2012, the department took another look at how it defined “park”. In addition to revising park categories, the City de-listed a handful of properties that, according to any objective measure, didn't function as parks and had little potential for ever serving that role well.
- d. An administrative decision was made to discontinue counting the 310 acre Green River Natural Resources Area (GRNRA) as a park. Because its primary function is to capture and detain storm water, which makes large portions of the property inaccessible to the public, and because it is stewarded by the City's Public Works Department, it was felt that it distorted any discussion on parks acreage in Kent by including a property whose recreational functions are secondary to its public works functions. Reclassifying the GRNRA doesn't take away the enjoyment people have when they use the property for recreation, but it does better reflect the collection of properties stewarded by the City for the primary purpose of recreation.

The ultimate result is that while the park system has seen minor growth in acreage since 2010, the numbers don't reflect the growth, nor do the numbers explain the performance-based approach to park planning that is consistent with fiscal realities.

A Call To Action

Our system is seeing remarkable challenges to its continued viability. The challenges come from a variety of sources, primarily the growth of our community and years of reduced resources. The park system is aging and while improvements are being made, they are modest when compared to the needs of the system. A backlog of work needed to replace dilapidated park features dwarfs the resources available to do the work.

Meeting the community's park and recreation needs now and into the future requires a call to action.

Using the City Council's vision as its starting point, the 2016 P&OS Plan lays out a number of park-system-specific goals to help implement the Council's vision.

The four primary goals of the Plan include:

Quality Public Spaces: Provide a high quality park system that promotes Kent as a livable city.

Sustainable Funding: Implement a funding model that adequately supports a Level of Service that reflects the community's priorities.

Performance-Based Approach: Plan and maintain the system with the help of a performance-based set of assessment tools.

Transformation Through Reinvestment: Reinvest in the existing system to successfully transform it into a vibrant and relevant urban park system.

Park Performance Tiers

This plan acknowledges the traditional approach to categorizing parks, and continues using it. Categorizing parks in terms of their roles—neighborhood park, community park, athletic facility, etc.—is a useful tool, because of its established use.

The 2016 P&OS plan creates another level of categorizing parks that focuses on the functional relationships between certain groups of parks and how well they perform in their roles within the system. We're calling this park categorization Park Performance Tiers, based on each park's Current and Potential Recreational Value scores. *Continued on Page 85.*

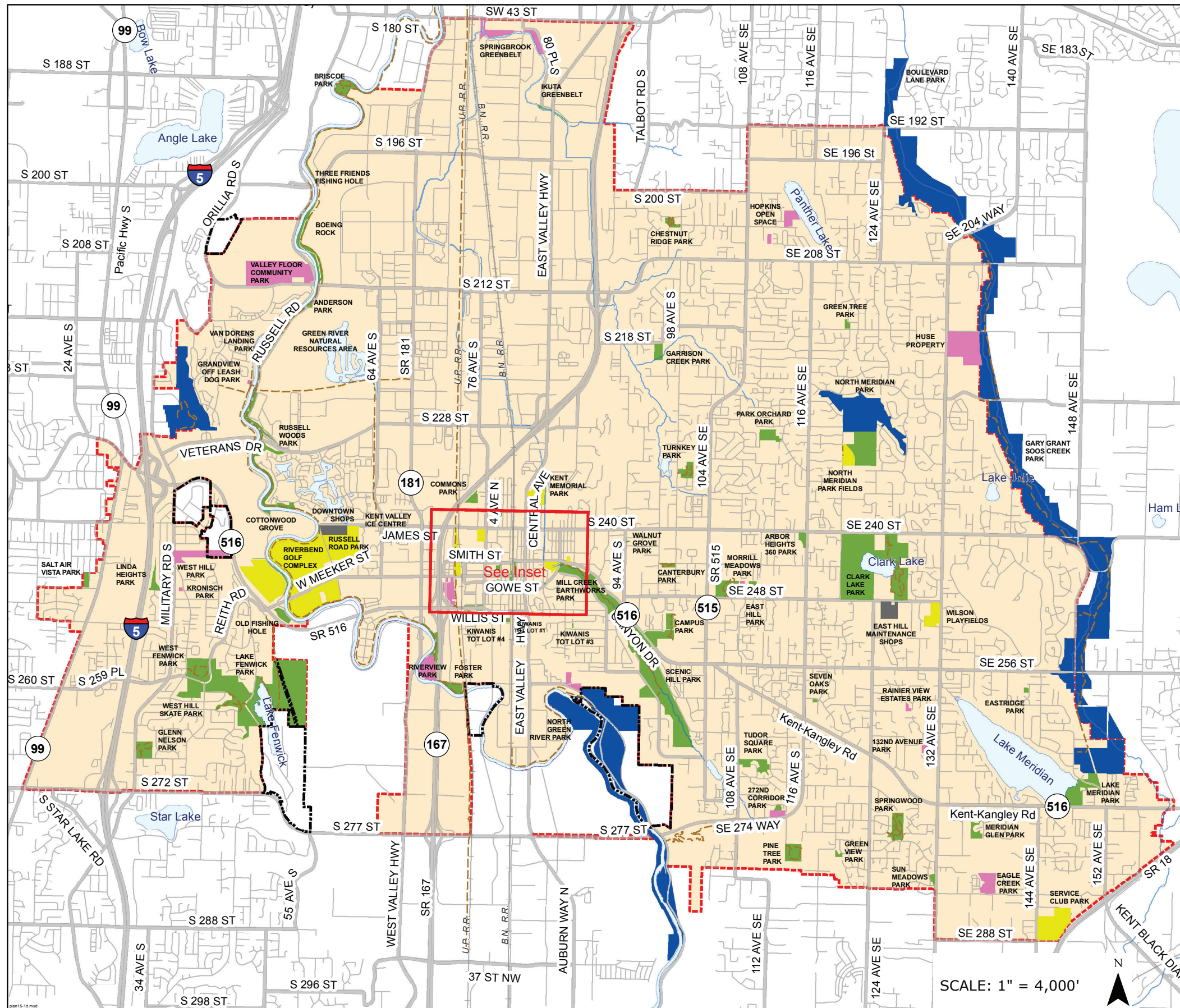
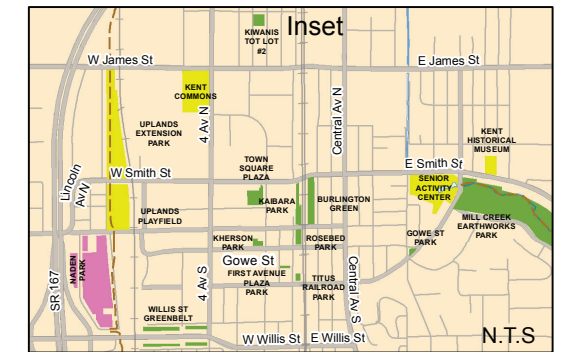


FIGURE P-1
PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

LEGEND

- POTENTIAL ANNEXATION AREA
- CITY LIMITS
- PARKS
- RECREATION FACILITIES
- MAINTENANCE FACILITIES
- UNDEVELOPED
- NON-KENT PARK
- TRAILS



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The Tiers in this performance-based ranking system are as follows:

Tier 6 – These parks will be the jewels of the Kent park system. They are likely to be part of a Park corridor and have good bike/pedestrian connectivity. Eight Kent parks have the Potential Recreational Value to earn this ranking. No Kent parks currently have this ranking.

Recreational Value Range: 17 or above

Target Classifications: Community, Community/Natural Resource, Community/Outdoor Rec Facility, Special Use

Current Parks in Tier 6: 0

Potential Parks in Tier 6: 10

Tier 5 – These are very high-performing parks, generally Community parks and Outdoor Rec Facilities such as athletic fields.

Recreational Value Range: Greater than or equal to 12 and Less than 17

Target Classifications: Community, Community/Natural Resource, Special Use, Outdoor Rec Facility

Current Parks in Tier 5: 1

Potential Parks in Tier 5: 10

Tier 4 – These are parks that are performing well and can include parks of all of the classifications seen in Tier 5 and 6. This tier will also include some high-performing Neighborhood parks that fill service area gaps.

Recreational Value Range: Greater than or equal to 7 and Less than 12

Target Classifications: Community, Community/Natural Resource, Community/Outdoor Rec Facility, Neighborhood, Special Use Parks

Current Parks in Tier 4: 8

Potential Parks in Tier 4: 18

Tier 3 – Tier 3 parks are well-functioning neighborhood parks or special use parks like skate or bike parks.

Recreational Value Range: Greater than 4 and Less than 7

Target Classifications: Neighborhood, Special Use

Current Parks in Tier 3: 8

Potential Parks in Tier 3: 15

Tier 2 – Tier 2 parks include small Tot Lots and Trailheads. Lower-performing neighborhood parks also fall in this Tier.

Recreational Value Range: Greater than 2 or Less than or equal to 4

Target Classifications: Special Use such as Pocket or Neighborhood

Current Parks in Tier 2: 15

Potential Parks in Tier 2: 13

Tier 1 – Tier 1 parks are the system's lowest-scoring parks. They may include well-performing Open Space or poorly-performing parks in other categories.

Recreational Value Range: 2 or Less

Target Classifications: Special Use such as Pocket or Natural Resource/Open Space

Current Parks in Tier 1: 23

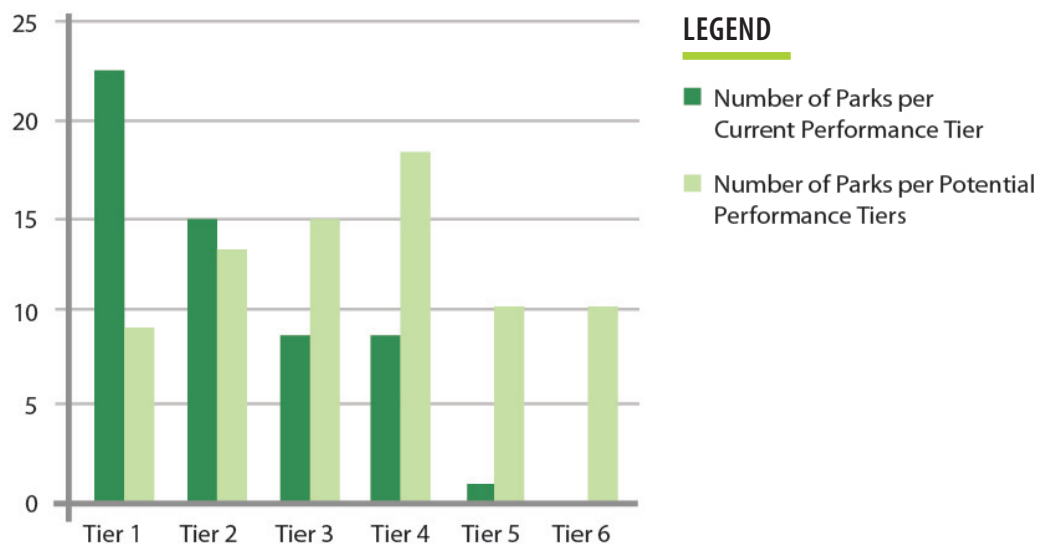
Potential Parks in Tier 1: 9

Because there is no practical reason to establish a performance cap on the tier system, it does not include a cap. Currently Kent's highest performing park ranks as a Tier 5. The City has eight parks whose Potential Recreational Value indicate their potential as Tier 6 parks. Depending on long-range assemblage and redevelopment opportunities, some of Kent's parks could eventually achieve even higher rankings.

Below is a comparison of Kent’s parks’ current performance tiers versus their potential performance tiers.

Table P.1

Current Performance Tiers versus Potential Performance Tiers



	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Tier 6
Current	23	15	8	8	1	0
Potential	9	13	15	18	10	10

The graph above shows that the majority of Kent’s parks are underperforming and that, with additional investment, the park system has the ability to provide significantly more Recreational Value to the community.

Other Local Recreation Facilities

The City is not the only provider of recreational opportunities in Kent There are school playgrounds and sports fields, private gyms and other recreational sites owned by other organizations. All these facilities are valued components of Kent's recreational "menu," and they all have important roles to play in the community. They're largely not discussed in this document, because the City has no authority to plan, manage or improve those sites. However, the City’s Parks Department does work with outside departments and agencies on joint efforts and will continue to pursue such opportunities when they're consistent with City Council goals and direction.

Levels of Service

One of the jobs of a parks and open space plan is to set the City’s Level of Service for their park system and provide recommendations for maintaining or adjusting that Level of Service. This section will discuss a new approach to that important measure.

“Level of Service”, or LOS, is a measure meant to describe to a community how much of a particular service residents are getting for their tax dollars. For example, the LOS for emergency services usually tells people how long they can typically expect to wait for emergency responses to their calls to 911, or how long they will usually wait to get through a given intersection during rush hour. LOS is also used to establish goals for that good or service, according to the overall priorities and resources of the community.

Establishing a Level of Service for a park system can be a bit trickier.

It's been widely shown that parks and recreation facilities provide immense value to a community. Organizations like the American Planning Association, the Trust for Public Land and the Urban Institute tell us that neighborhoods with well-used and well-maintained parks tend to have higher values and lower crime rates than comparable neighborhoods without parks. The Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Biotechnology have produced research demonstrating that parks have positive impacts on physical and mental health. Again and again, surveys show that people consider local parks an important public amenity.

But, how many parks are enough? Communities all over the country have struggled and continue to struggle to answer that question.

New Level of Service Measure

The new Level of Service measurement for the Kent parks system was created by looking at the Current Recreational Value of the existing Kent parks inventory, the condition of assets and parks as a whole and the Potential Recreational Value of current and yet-to-be-developed parks.

The comparison of Current Recreational Value to Potential Recreational Value provides an indication of the degree to which current parks are performing to their potential. Looking at the Potential Recreational Value of undeveloped properties shows how much developing these properties will add to the City's park system's Level of Service. Dividing the Current Recreational Value per 1000 residents provides a current Level of Service measure for Kent's park system. Looking at the Potential Recreational Value per 1000 residents illustrates the potential LOS that Kent's park system has.

Kent's Level Of Service Under The New Approach

Below is a table comparing the old and new methods of measuring Level of Service for 1993, 2003, 2015, and estimated for 2035 (based on growth estimates used for the Comprehensive Plan).

Table P.2
Kent's Population

		1993	2003	2015	2035
Kent's Population	-	41,000	84,275	122,900	138,156
Acreage Per 1000 Residents	Old LOS	20.72	15.98	8.91	7.93
Recreational Amenities Per 1000 Residents	-	???	2.44*	2.11	???
Recreational Value Per 1000 Residents	New LOS	???	???	1.62	???

*Estimate based on 2002 Park Map

Currently, the Level of Service for Kent's park system is 1.62 per the new LOS approach. This is the new baseline measurement for future parks plans to compare against. Whether the LOS goes up or down will be determined by the level of investment in the park system.

The table shows that using the old acres-per-thousand-residents approach, system LOS has been steadily dropping since 1993. In order to achieve the same LOS in 2015 that Kent enjoyed in 1993, the City would need to acquire hundreds of acres of new park land. Given current fiscal realities, that's not a realistic goal.

Level Of Service By City Region

Assessing the citywide Level of Service is critical for planning; but, for a city the size of Kent, it is also useful to measure LOS by city region. The 2016 P&OS plan breaks Kent into five geographic regions: Downtown, Green River, West Hill, East Hill North and East Hill South. Below is a table that summarizes LOS in each city region.

Table P.3
LOS Per Region

REGION	POPULATION	CURRENT AMENITIES	CURRENT RECREATIONAL VALUE (RV)	POTENTIAL RECREATIONAL VALUE	LEVEL OF SERVICE (RV PER 1000 PEOPLE)	POTENTIAL LEVEL OF SERVICE
Downtown	3,662.00	49.75	37.65	125.50	10.28	34.27
Green River	16,041.00	66.75	49.40	166.00	3.08	10.35
East Hill South	43,786.00	89.25	70.70	192.25	1.61	4.39
West Hill	16,125.00	29.25	21.75	83.25	1.35	5.16
East Hill North	42,162.50	24.50	19.63	98.00	0.47	2.32
Total in 2016*	122,900.00	259.50	199.13	665.00	1.62	5.41
Estimated 2035**	138,156.00	-	-	-	1.44	4.81

* Regional counts do not add up to total city population because they were obtained from different sources.

**Assumes no change to recreational value of the system.

The new performance-based Level of Service will allow parks staff to track how much Recreational Value Kent's Park System is providing. Performance-based LOS is a tool that has the potential to link what is in our parks, the level at which they are funded, where capital investments are made, how maintenance hours are expended and acquisition and surplus priorities. These are exciting possibilities from a park planning perspective, but at the same time this is a new system that will be beta tested over the life of the 2016 P&OS Plan. Changes are likely as staff learns how to use this new planning tool.

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies lay out priorities related to the continuing development and stewardship of the City's park and open space system over the coming years.

Overall Goal

Encourage and provide local public opportunities for physical activity, connecting to nature, community engagement and life-enrichment through the strategic development and thoughtful stewardship of park land and recreational facilities, professional programming, preservation of natural areas, and the optimum utilization of available community resources.

I. Park & Recreation Facilities Goals and Policies

Maintain and steward a high-quality park and recreation system designed to appeal to a diverse range of abilities, ages and interests.

Goal P&OS-1

Promote the provision of quality recreational opportunities throughout the City.

Policy P&OS-1.1: Work with other departments to encourage new single-family and multifamily residential, and commercial developments, to provide recreation elements.

Policy P&OS-1.2: When acquiring, planning, developing or redeveloping park properties, recognize that the different areas of the City have different recreational needs (e.g., the parks needs for the downtown area are different from those on, say, East Hill) and establish a protocol for incorporating consideration of those different needs into the various decision-making processes.

Policy P&OS-1.3: Where appropriate, initiate with other private and public interests joint development ventures that meet recreational needs and achieve City of Kent strategic goals.

Goal P&OS-2

Develop, maintain and operate a high-quality system of indoor facilities designed to appeal to a diverse range of abilities, ages and interests.

Policy P&OS-2.1: Manage existing multiple-use indoor community centers that provide indoor recreational and gathering opportunities for a wide range of ages, abilities and interests on a year-round basis.

Policy P&OS-2.2: Continue to seek strategic partnerships with other public and private agencies to provide indoor recreational opportunities, particularly in underserved areas of the City.

Goal P&OS-3

Where appropriate, possibly in conjunction with other public or private organizations, develop and operate specialized park and recreational enterprises that meet the interest of populations who are able and willing to finance, maintain or operate them.

Policy P&OS-3.1: Where appropriate and economically feasible (i.e., self-supporting), develop and operate specialized and special interest recreational facilities like golf, ice skating, disc golf, mountain biking and off-leash parks.

Goal P&OS-4

Further develop the performance-based approach to stewarding park and recreation facilities that is introduced in the 2016 Park & Open Space Plan.

Policy P&OS-4.1: Prior to acquiring, surplus and/or developing a potential park or recreational facility, carefully evaluate its potential contribution to the system, and only proceed if the potential action is considered to be complementary to the system and can contribute to the system's overall performance.

Policy P&OS-4.2: Prior to renovating a park asset or redeveloping a park, carefully evaluate its current and potential contribution to the system, and only proceed if the potential investment is considered to be complementary to the system and can contribute to the system's overall performance.

Policy P&OS-4.3: Periodically evaluate the entire system in terms of each park's and facility's performance. Consider recommending the repurposing of any asset or property whose current and potential recreational value is not expected to contribute to the system's overall performance.

Goal P&OS-5

Despite having multiple water bodies in its jurisdiction, the City has limited public water access. Work with other public and private entities to preserve and increase waterfront access and facilities.

Policy P&OS-5.1: Work with other public and private agencies to acquire, develop and preserve additional shoreline access for waterfront fishing, wading, swimming, scenic viewing and other related recreational activities and pursuits, especially on the Green River, Lake Fenwick, Clark Lake, Lake Meridian and Panther Lake.

Policy P&OS-5.2: For any public or private waterfront projects, work with the property owner or project representative to find ways to include public access, including access to scenic views of the water.

II. Open Space Goals and Policies

The City of Kent contains significant public open spaces and greenways. Through careful and thoughtful stewardship of these properties, the City can improve urban habitat and pedestrian connectivity and increase the public's appreciation and understanding of the importance of these spaces in the urban setting.

Goal P&OS-6

Thoughtfully and strategically acquire and manage public open space to improve wildlife habitat and other environmental benefits as well as non-motorized connectivity and other complementary recreational benefits.

Policy P&OS-6.1: Seek to improve greenway corridors within the Kent area.

Policy P&OS-6.2: Increase linkages of trails and other existing or planned connections with greenways and open space, particularly along the Green River, Mill Creek, Garrison Creek and Soos Creek corridors; around Lake Fenwick, Clark Lake, Lake Meridian, Panther Lake and Lake Youngs; and around significant wetland and floodways such as the Green River Natural Resource Area.

Goal P&OS-7

Continue to develop an urban forestry management program that balances environmental benefits with recreation and public safety priorities.

Policy P&OS-7.1: Connect people to nature and improve the quality of life in Kent by restoring and enhancing the urban ecosystem.

Policy P&OS-7.2: Galvanize the community around urban ecosystem restoration and stewardship through a volunteer restoration program.

III. Trail and Corridor System Goals and Policies

Develop a high-quality system of multipurpose park trails and corridors that create important linkages or provide access to desirable destinations, including significant environmental features, public facilities, developed neighborhoods, employment centers and commercial areas.

Goal P&OS-8

Continue to work with other departments and agencies to develop and improve a comprehensive system of multipurpose off-road and on-road trails that link park and recreational resources with residential areas, public facilities, commercial and employment centers both within Kent and within the region.

Policy P&OS-8.1: Seek opportunities to develop trail “missing links” along existing routes, including the Puget Power rights-of-way, Soos Creek Trail, Mill Creek Trail, Lake Fenwick Trail, Green River Trail, Frager Road and the Interurban Trail.

Policy P&OS-8.2: Work with other city departments to create a comprehensive system of on-road trails to improve connectivity for the bicycle commuter, recreational and touring enthusiasts using scenic, collector and local road rights-of-way and alignments. Special emphasis should be placed on increasing east-west connectivity.

Policy P&OS-8.3: Work with neighboring cities, King County and other appropriate jurisdictions to connect Kent trails to other community and regional trail facilities like the Green River, Interurban, Frager Road and Soos Creek Trails.

Policy P&OS-8.4: Extend trails through natural area corridors like the Green River, Mill Creek, Garrison Creek and Soos Creek, and around natural features like Lake Fenwick, Clark Lake, Lake Meridian and Panther Lake in order to provide a high-quality, diverse public access to Kent’s environmental resources.

Goal P&OS-9

Furnish trail corridors, trailheads and other supporting sites with amenities to improve comfort, safety and overall user experience.

Policy P&OS-9.1: Improve accessibility to trails by siting trailheads and appropriate improvements in high-visibility locations.

Policy P&OS-9.2: Design and develop trail improvements that are easy to maintain and easy to access by maintenance, security and other appropriate personnel, equipment and vehicles.

IV. Historic and Cultural Resources Goals and Policies

Through sensitive design, preservation and interpretation, the park system can help educate the public regarding Kent's rich cultural and historical legacy.

Goal P&OS-10

Preserve, enhance and incorporate historic and cultural resources and multi-cultural interests into the park and recreational system.

Policy P&OS-10.1: Identify and incorporate significant historic and cultural resource lands, sites, artifacts and facilities into the park system when feasible.

Policy P&OS-10.2: Work with the Kent Historical Society and other cultural resource groups to incorporate community activities and interpretation of historic homes and sites into the park and recreation system.

V. Cultural Arts Programs and Resources Goals and Policies

Develop high-quality, diversified cultural arts facilities and programs that increase community awareness, attendance and other opportunities for participation.

Goal P&OS-11

Work with the arts community to utilize local resources and talents to increase public access to artwork and programs.

Policy P&OS-11.1: Support successful collaborations among the Arts Commission, business community, service groups, cultural organizations, schools, arts patrons and artists to utilize artistic resources and talents to the optimum degree possible.

Policy P&OS-11.2: Develop strategies that will support and assist local artists and art organizations. Where appropriate, develop and support policies and programs that encourage or provide incentives to attract and retain artists and artwork within the Kent community.

**Goal P&OS-12**

Acquire and display public artwork to furnish public facilities and other areas and thereby increase public access and appreciation.

Policy P&OS-12.1: Acquire public artwork including paintings, sculptures, exhibits and other media for indoor and outdoor display in order to expand access by residents and to furnish public places in an appropriate manner.

Policy P&OS-12.2: Develop strategies that will support capital and operations funding for public artwork within parks and facilities.

VI. Facility Design Goals and Policies

Design and develop facilities that are welcoming to Kent's diverse community, are attractive, safe and easy to maintain, with life-cycle features that account for long-term costs and benefits.

Goal P&OS-13

Design park and recreational indoor and outdoor facilities to be accessible to a wide range of physical capabilities, skill levels, age groups, income levels and activity interests.

Policy P&OS-13.1: Look for opportunities to incorporate the principles of inclusive design in any new construction.

Policy P&OS-13.2: When designing new recreational facilities, reach out to the public to learn their priorities, needs and desires for the improvements, and use public input to inform the design.

Goal P&OS-14

Design and develop park and recreational facilities to be of low-maintenance materials.

Policy P&OS-14.1: Design and develop facilities that are of low-maintenance and high-quality materials to reduce overall facility maintenance and operation requirements and costs.

Policy P&OS-14.2: Incorporate maintenance considerations early in the process in all designs for parks and recreational facilities.

Goal P&OS-15

Design for a safe and welcoming park environment.

Policy P&OS-15.1: Using the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and other design and development standards and practices, seek opportunities to improve park safety and security features for users, department personnel and the public at large.

VII. Fiscal Coordination Goals and Policies

Adhere to cost-effective, sustainable and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, renovating, operating and maintaining facilities and programs that provide high quality and relevant recreational benefits to the public. Provide options for long-term financial sustainability to help ensure an enduring, vibrant and viable park and recreation system.

Goal P&OS-16

Investigate proven and practical methods of financing park and recreational requirements, including joint ventures with other public agencies and private organizations and private donations.

Policy P&OS-16.1: Investigate various public financing options that may contribute to a long-term, sustainable approach to finance a vibrant, relevant, safe and attractive park and recreation system.

Policy P&OS-16.2: Where feasible and desirable, consider joint ventures with King County, Kent, Highline and Federal Way School Districts, regional, state, federal and other public agencies and private organizations to acquire, develop and manage regional facilities (i.e., swimming pool, off-leash park, etc.).

Policy P&OS-16.3: Maintain and work with foundations and non-profits to investigate grants and solicit donations to provide secondary support for facility development, acquisition, maintenance, programs, services and operating needs.

Related Information:

City of Kent 2016 Park & Open Space Plan