

Parks and Recreation

The Snohomish County park system is incredibly diverse and boasts more than 11,000 acres of parks and open space; 105 park properties; hundreds of miles of trails; and more than 47 miles of fresh and saltwater shoreline. Major regional park assets such as the Evergreen State Fairgrounds, Kayak Point Park, Lord Hill Park and the Centennial, Interurban, and Whitehorse trail systems host local, regional, and national events that draw more than 4.4 million visitors each year to Snohomish County parks.

Parks play a critical role in building livable and sustainable communities. They contribute to the health and wellness of individual residents and communities by providing safe places to walk, swim, ride, run, recreate, and play. County parks, events, trails, and open space are on the front line of regional economic development efforts. The region receives more than 30 million dollars each year in positive economic impact through the following activities which take place in county parks and recreation facilities: camping and overnight lodging, special events, tournaments, environmental education, and tourism. The Snohomish County Parks and Recreation Department (Parks) is the largest land steward in county government and its parks, trails, and open space contribute to the clean water, clean air, healthy forests, and great beaches that Snohomish County residents and visitors enjoy.

Parks has identified and developed park priorities through public planning processes since the department's inception in 1963. The public process seeks input from stakeholders, including county residents, cities and towns, school districts, user groups, and others to assist in identifying park land and facility needs. These

stakeholder-identified needs are paired together with further analysis to define long-term priorities to provide parks and park facilities.

Parks began summarizing park needs, and long-range strategies for meeting those needs, in a new Park and Recreation Element (PRE) beginning in 2015. The PRE is structured to more efficiently address issues related to the Growth Management Act (GMA) and provide more flexibility in updating planning documents.

Parks has previously published this information in Comprehensive Park Plans adopted in: 1965, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1994, 2001, and 2007.

Some of the content previously found in Comprehensive Park Plans has been relocated into a Snohomish County Parks and Recreation Visioning Plan (PRVP). This content emphasizes public feedback on recreation priorities and public satisfaction with park facilities. The PRVP will inform long-term planning exercises and short-term funding decisions. Parks anticipates the PRVP will be updated at least every six years and will help gauge changes in public priorities. The PRVP is not a component of the Comprehensive Plan.

The PRE summarizes long-term needs and strategies that have been developed to meet them.

The PRE provides the foundation for park land and facility level-of-service standards specified in the county Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). The Park Improvement Plan

(PIP) identifies short-term projects to be completed within a six-year time period. These projects support and address the needs in the PRE. The County will use the PIP and the PRVP to identify projects that may be incorporated into the county's six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

The primary funding sources available to the Parks Department are: local real estate excise taxes (REET), general fund revenues, impact/mitigation fees, Conservation Futures Tax Program revenues, and outside grant funding.

GOAL PR 1 Provide recreation services to Snohomish County's residents in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Objective PR 1.A Promote coordination among recreation providers in Snohomish County to efficiently deliver parks and recreation services and to collaborate on issues of shared concern.

- PR Policies**
- 1.A.1 Coordinate with cities, towns, school districts, park districts, and other junior taxing districts to develop an integrated system of passive and active parks, open spaces, and trails that are accessible to all residents of the county, cities, and towns.
 - 1.A.2 Include cities and towns in the planning process for park facilities in areas that may be annexed.
 - 1.A.3 Consider joint agreements with cities and towns for the maintenance and operation of parks facilities in areas that may be annexed.
 - 1.A.4 Identify parks suitable for transfer to cities and towns and consider negotiating with cities and towns for the orderly transfer of those parks to those cities and towns.
 - 1.A.5 Partner with park districts, school districts, cities, towns, and other recreational service providers and coordinate on service delivery.

Objective PR 1.B Promote coordination among recreation providers outside Snohomish County to efficiently deliver parks and recreation services and to collaborate on issues of shared concern.

- PR Policies**
- 1.B.1 Coordinate with Skagit and King Counties' cities and towns and with Skagit and King Counties in planning and constructing Regional Trails.
 - 1.B.2 Coordinate with state and federal entities to promote integration of park and recreational facilities and ensure continued public access to parks and recreational facilities.

GOAL PR 2 Provide diverse recreational opportunities through Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Special Use Parks, Regional Parks, and Regional Trails.

Objective PR 2.A Maintain and develop a variety of park facilities.

- PR Policies**
- 2.A.1 Consider input from residents, stakeholder groups, school districts, parks and recreation districts, cities, and towns in developing and determining maintenance priorities for Snohomish County’s parks and recreation facilities.
 - 2.A.2 Explore and develop programs to assist cities and towns in their efforts to acquire Neighborhood Parks within their UGAs.
 - 2.A.3 Maintain adopted level-of-service standards by acquiring and developing new parks and park facilities and by expanding the capacities of existing parks and park facilities.
 - 2.A.4 Renovate aging park facilities to maintain and improve their existing use. Priority for renovation should be given to park facilities that:
 - Require significant maintenance due to facility age,
 - Require or could significantly benefit from energy or water efficiency upgrades,
 - Are heavily used or are significant revenue generators, or
 - Are close to water bodies and do not meet current stormwater standards.
 - 2.A.5 Prioritize developing Regional Trails.

GOAL PR 3 Maintain and monitor minimum level-of-service standards for parks and for park facilities that are necessary to support development.

Objective PR 3.A Complete an annual “Statement of Assessment” for the Snohomish County CIP to track current level-of-service for park classifications and park facilities that are necessary to support development.

- PR Policies**
- 3.A.1 Apply a level-of-service method to: monitor the level-of-service of park facilities necessary to support development; identify priority parks projects that are necessary to support development; and provide a basis for collecting and allocating park impact mitigation fees.

- 3.A.2 The level-of-service necessary to support development is established by measurable units of the following categories of park facilities: active recreation facilities; passive recreation facilities; regional trails; waterfront; campsites; and parking spaces. These park facilities contribute to the level-of-service necessary to support development when located in the following classifications of parks: Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, and Regional Trails.
- 3.A.3 Impact fees should be used to: (1) develop park facilities that are categorized as active recreation facilities, passive recreation facilities, regional trails, waterfront, campsites, and parking spaces in Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, and Regional Trails; and (2) acquire park properties for Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, and Regional Trails.
- 3.A.4 Review the level-of-service method periodically.
- 3.A.5 Standards for level-of-service necessary to support development should guide, but not limit, acquiring and developing parks and park facilities.

Objective PR 3.B Consider improving developed park properties before improving undeveloped park sites.

- PR Policies**
- 3.B.1 Acquire park properties and develop park facilities to meet level-of-service standards, priorities identified in the Parks and Recreation Element, priorities identified in other county plans, and emerging needs identified by the Parks Department.
 - 3.B.2 Develop new parks and park facilities when opportune and appropriate even if minimum planning goals are achieved.

GOAL PR 4 Acquire park properties and develop park facilities that meet existing and projected growth needs of the County and that meet priorities identified in other Snohomish County Plans.

Objective PR 4.A Prioritize park property acquisitions and acquire park properties that are consistent with the priorities of the Park and Recreation Element and CIP.

- PR Policies**
- 4.A.1 Evaluate potential park acquisitions by considering the priorities identified in the Park and Recreation Element and the Capital Improvement Program.
 - 4.A.2 Acquire, develop, or expand park facilities as identified in the Park and Recreation Element.

- 4.A.3 Evaluate, pursue, and develop unique, unanticipated acquisition opportunities that are presented to the Parks Department, as appropriate.
- 4.A.4 Acquire land and develop additional water access with a priority on providing saltwater access.
- 4.A.5 Work with the Parks Advisory Board to update the acquisition goals and guidelines to reflect priorities in the Park and Recreation Element and Capital Improvement Program.
- 4.A.6 Use the Snohomish County Parks Advisory Board's acquisition goals and guidelines process and the Parks Advisory Board's recommendations in evaluating potential park acquisitions.
- 4.A.7 Use the Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board's recommendations when applying funds from the Conservation Futures Tax Fund.

GOAL PR 5 Provide open space and natural areas with appropriate public access to promote understanding and support of the natural environment and of the benefits these lands provide.

Objective PR 5.A Manage and maintain open space and natural properties in Parks Department's inventory.

- PR Policies**
- 5.A.1 Seek opportunities for natural resource enhancement within the Parks Department's inventory.
 - 5.A.2 Explore techniques to manage and protect forest lands in Parks Department's inventory.
 - 5.A.3 Partner with public and private organizations to assist in habitat improvement, monitoring, and research on county park lands.

GOAL PR 6 Support recreation programs and provide programs on a case-by-case basis.

Objective PR 6.A Develop and maintain parks and park facilities suitable for recreation programs.

- PR Policies**
- 6.A.1 Offer recreational programs on a case-by-case basis.
 - 6.A.2 Support recreation programs provided by external agencies, jurisdictions, and private vendors at Snohomish County parks and park facilities.

- 6.A.3 Provide recreation programs when they are unique to a park or park facility, they fulfill an identified community need, or they support overall objectives of the Parks Department.

GOAL PR 7 Assist in preserving the cultural and historic resources of Snohomish County.

Objective PR 7.A Propagate the cultural and historic resources of Snohomish County through land acquisition, protection, and interpretation.

- PR Policies**
- 7.A.1 Work with communities, historical organizations, and local tribes to identify culturally and historically significant properties appropriate for Snohomish County’s park system.
 - 7.A.2 Provide interpretive opportunities at parks when appropriate and feasible.

GOAL PR 8 Promote sustainable operation by considering financial, environmental, and social implications of the Parks and Recreation Department’s actions.

Objective PR 8.A Consider a variety of innovative funding methods, including, but not limited to, sponsorships, agreements with vendors, public and private partnerships, selling of naming rights, adjustments to user fees, and operational efficiencies.

- PR Policies**
- 8.A.1 Prioritize methods such as sponsorships, agreements with vendors, and selling of naming rights over increased user fees for generating revenue.
 - 8.A.2 Provide operational efficiencies by replacing aging infrastructure with updated energy and water efficient components and by implementing naturalization and sustainable operation initiatives when feasible.

Objective PR 8.B Encourage recreational amenities in Recreation Areas.

- PR Policies**
- 8.B.1 Coordinate with other recreational providers within the Recreation Areas and promote opportunities for collaboration.
 - 8.B.2 Consider additional Recreation Areas as promoted by outside groups, or within the department, when they are proposed.