

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to develop and establish a community supported road map for the provision of high quality parks, trails, facilities, programs, and open spaces throughout the City of Longview. The comprehensive plan identifies current and future parks and recreation needs, and sets forth goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines to improve the above-mentioned areas. Implementation of city policies and recommendations for future recreational facilities are included in this document. This plan was based on Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) guidelines.

The RCO Manual 2; Planning Policies and Guidelines (2014), provides direction for planning efforts such as this undertaking. It notes that “planning is vital to the success of any effort to provide recreation opportunities or to conserve habitat. Planning that engages people, supporters and opponents alike, will help ensure that the right actions are taken for the right reasons at the right time.” Demonstrating eligibility for RCO funding is one of the principal objectives of this activity.

1.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Longview’s 2009 Parks and Recreation Plan was an update of the 2000 and 2008 plans and is the result of efforts led by the Parks and Recreation Department staff and directed by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. This Plan update continues the city’s long history of planning and providing a high quality parks and recreation system. This plan responds to the many changes that have occurred over the past several years; reaffirms the system wide vision, goals and objectives, and outlines new strategies for the future.

Updating the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan will:

- Provide an update of the city’s existing parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, and trails;
- Ensure the plan accurately reflects the changes in public perceptions, needs and interests related to the park and recreation system;
- Remain current with changing social, economic, and environmental conditions;
- Recommends new projects and implementation strategies to guide development of the system;
- Addresses state-wide requirements and renews the City’s eligibility for grants through Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office;
- Aid in meeting the city wide initiatives set forth by Longview City Council.

The Population section of the document compares 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census data. The planning process followed procedures recommended by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and the document contains the elements necessary to satisfy RCO planning requirements, thus making the City eligible to compete for state grants and other funding opportunities.

1.3 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for preparing the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan update comprised of four phases depicted below.



- **Analysis and Review:** The initial phase consisted of a review of changes since the 2009 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan, including changes in land use, system inventory, park improvements, funding opportunities and partnerships.
- **Community Needs Assessment:** During this phase, the planning team conducted public outreach using a range of sources, and met with City staff and community stakeholders to create a strong foundation to base the plan.
- **Plan Development:** During the third phase, the planning team collected input from the community and discussed the preferred future system with City staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The planning team also revisited the goals and objectives with the outcomes of the first phase and developed updated recommendations and directions for the Comprehensive Plan update.
- **Plan Adoption:** The Plan Adoption phase consisted of Draft Plan development with a detailed implementation strategy, public hearings to review the plan, and adoption by City Council.

1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Involvement from the public is a major contributor towards the Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan update. The planning team solicited feedback from community members, stakeholders, and City leaders in a variety of ways to ensure that the updated plan reflects the priorities and needs of the community.

This plan relied on the following primary public outreach opportunities:

- **Community Survey:** The survey was a key tool for broadening participation and validating the input received via the community intercept events. The design on the survey allowed for comparison of the findings from the survey in 2009. There were 739 surveys were completed in 2015 (Appendix A - provides a detailed summary of survey)

- **City Website:** The City’s main website, along with the Parks and Recreation websites, provided information about the Plan and the community involvement opportunities to the public throughout the planning process.
- **City Staff Strategy Session:** The planning team met with City department heads from parks, planning, and public works to identify opportunities, challenges, and needs facing the system. This meeting also served to refine key recommendations in the updated plan.
- **Public Meetings:** The planning team worked with Park and Recreation Advisory Board, Mint Valley Golf Advisory Board, and Visual Arts Commission throughout the stages of the planning process. These meetings served as a time to go through each section of the plan and provide for feedback and suggestions from the advisory groups along the way.
- **Community Forum and Events:** These activities allowed the public to learn about the plan at specific Comprehensive Plan public meetings and at popular community events. There were two events during while the survey was open which consisted of a series of open ended topics that allowed participants to express their needs and provide comments related to the future of the system. Members of the planning team were available to respond to questions and provide more detailed information about the project. The planning team also used Parks and Recreation special events to educate, promote, and announce the community survey.

1.5 AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The planning process for parks, recreation, and open space does not end with the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the next six years, factors such as population growth, new development, land acquisition, and community need could directly affect the planning for the future. The City will take a pro-active approach to track the progress of the plan to ensure it meets the needs of the community and make amendments as needed.

- **Development Review** - All planning throughout the City should be consistent between planning documents. This is crucial to ensure that smart growth and forward thinking development options include parks, recreation, and open space especially in areas of deficiency laid out within the plan.
- **Two Year Review** - The City, along with the appropriate board, should review the plan every two years to ensure that amenities, facilities, or other significant changes are reflected within the plan. This will enable the City to show a measurable impact of daily work and guide future decisions. A two year work plan that includes short term accomplishments, goals, and future initiatives should take place three times throughout the six year plan.
- **Six Year Update** - Every six years the City will undergo a full comprehensive update of the plan to maintain the eligibility of state and federal park and recreation grants.

1.6 PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT CORE VALUES AND MISSION

Residents of the City of Longview recognize the many benefits provided by parks, trails, open space, and recreation programs. Parks and recreation facilities help to conserve the natural environment, build stronger communities, foster healthier lifestyles, and enhance the quality of life for the community. The Longview Parks and Recreation Department plays a critical role in providing these benefits, in accordance with our core values: Excellent Service, Play & Creativity, Lifestyle Enrichment, Unity & Collaboration, and Conservation.

Our mission is to “Create a healthy community by providing high quality parks and recreation services to everyone.” We commit to our mission by programming quality recreational opportunities that address the needs of our community; protect the natural environment through a diversified system of parks and open space; and preserve a quality living environment for future generations.

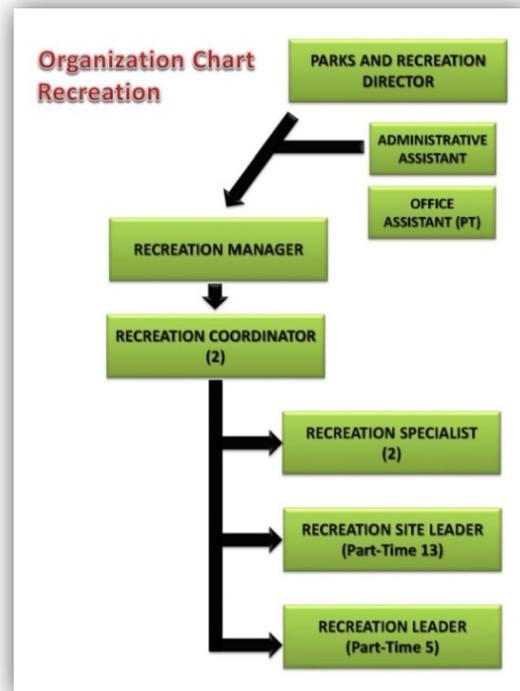
1.7 DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

There are three divisions within the Parks and Recreation Department, consisting of the Recreation Services Division, Parks Services Division, and Mint Valley Golf Course Division. The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for the overall management and operation of the department as a whole. The Director is also the liaison between the department and the City Manager, City Council, citizen boards and commissions, and other department directors.

RECREATION SERVICES DIVISION

The Recreation Services Division is responsible for the administration of recreation programs and activities offered by the city including special events such as “Concerts in the Park.” There are six full-time employees; approximately 24 part-time employees; 150 to 200 volunteers donating 1000’s of hours; and approximately 50 individuals that provide programs on a contractual basis.

Recreation provides comprehensive year-round programs and events designed to meet the needs of the community. Programs are funded through a combination of fees, charges, sponsorships, donations, and general fund resources. Where feasible, the division’s philosophy is to set program fees to cover the direct costs of providing programs and a portion of the indirect or administrative costs, including marketing and staffing. However, for many programs that serve vulnerable populations, including those for senior citizens, youth, at-risk teens, and individuals with special needs, it is policy not to charge full rates that would guarantee full cost recovery.

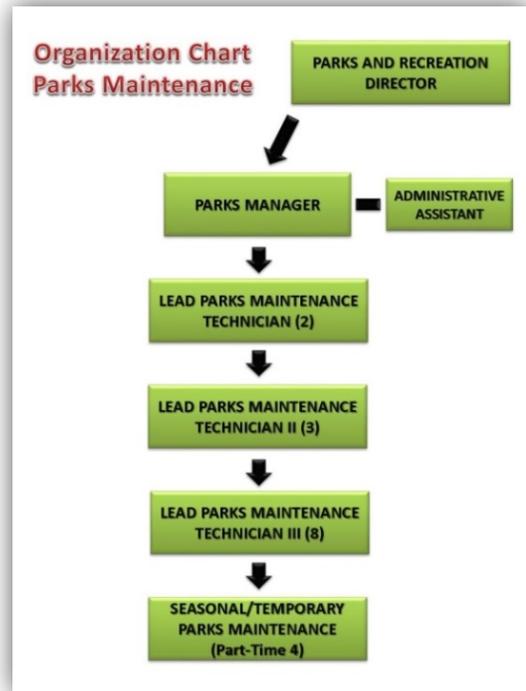


PARK SERVICES DIVISION

The Parks Services Division maintains parks; sports facilities; boulevards; grounds of City Hall and the library; trails; undeveloped park lands; and beautification sites throughout the city. Responsibilities include care of turf; shrubs and flowerbeds; irrigation and water systems; trail maintenance; installation and maintenance of playground equipment; cleaning and maintenance of restroom facilities; and oversight of park amenities such as tennis courts, fountains, athletic fields, skate park, and boat launch. A Parks Manager oversees the parks and urban forestry division, 11 full-time field employees on staff, and a varying number of part-time employees working seasonally spring through fall.

URBAN FORESTRY

The Urban Forestry Division is responsible for the care and maintenance of 14,000+ street, park, and city owned property trees located throughout the city. The Parks Manager oversees the maintenance including: pruning; removal; stump grinding; insect and disease control; and planting of replacement trees. Hand watering, staking, hazard evaluations, and sonic tomography are also completed by this division, which currently employs two full-time field employees and one part-time employee.



MINT VALLEY GOLF COURSE



The Golf Course Division is responsible for the administration of all operations relating to the golf course including: an 18-hole championship golf course; 6-hole par 3 course; covered driving range; chipping and sand bunker areas; practice green; pro-shop; restaurant facility; maintenance facility; and two power cart storage facilities. The division employs two full-time maintenance employees and up to 10 part-time employees depending upon the weather and need of the course. The pro-shop and restaurant operations are contracted to a manager who employs his/her own staff. He/she retains a percentage of the green fees, lessons, cart rentals, driving range rentals, all of the pro-shop equipment sales, and restaurant revenue. The golf course does not receive any city general fund revenue to help offset operating expenditures. It is required to be a self-sustaining operation supported by fees and charges.

MINT VALLEY RACQUET AND FITNESS COMPLEX

Although the racquet and fitness complex management is not considered a stand-alone division of the Parks and Recreation Department, the facility falls under the umbrella of the department. The indoor facility features four tennis courts, four racquetball courts, a viewing lobby, fitness center with cardiovascular station and free weights, a small pro-shop, and locker rooms. Other than competitive play in tennis and racquetball, the courts are used for pickleball, walleyball, lessons, and rentals. Currently, it is managed and operated by an outside contractor. The contractor is responsible for all aspects of the facility with the exception of capital improvements.

1.8 BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

There are three volunteer groups that assist the Parks and Recreation Department and play an advisory role to the Director of Parks and Recreation and the City Council.

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

This five member board performs the duties as provided by the laws of the state relating to boards of park commissions. They make recommendations to City Council concerning acquisition, planning development, grant awards, park design, tree policies, and naming of parks. They advise regarding facility and recreation fees, policies and planning development, and establishing rules and regulations governing the division. They also serve as the Tree Board and the Play Board.

VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION

This five member commission is authorized to take action on behalf of the city, to encourage, conduct, sponsor, or co-sponsor public programs with the goal of enhancing and promoting the further development and public awareness/interest in the visual arts. They make recommendations to the City Council concerning the acquisition and location of public art.

MINT VALLEY GOLF COURSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This five member advisory committee acts as a liaison between the golfing public and the golf course division in order to provide feedback regarding division needs and operations. They perform studies and make recommendations concerning long-range planning and development, as well as assist with financial decisions, policy matters, and operations decisions.

1.9 BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Health and wellness issues continue to arise in Cowlitz County, as noted by articles within the local newspaper as well as the Cowlitz County Report Card on Health. Parks and recreation programs are excellent ways to introduce or continue with physical activity and helping to encourage lifelong fitness habits. According to the California State Parks Recreation Planning Division¹, there are numerous benefits to parks and recreation.

¹ The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation, *An Element of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program*,

PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- A. Reduces Obesity
 - Obesity continues to be a major health concern and is closely linked to physical inactivity.
- B. Diminishes Risk of Chronic Disease
 - Symptoms can be prevented or improved through physical activity in diseases such as Heart Disease, Diabetes, Cancer, and Osteoporosis
- C. Boosts Immune System
 - A physically fit person is less prone to illness and has a lower annual direct medical cost.

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- A. Reduces Depression
 - Recreation activities can help prevent and treat many forms of depression.
- B. Relieves Stress
 - Participants use recreation programs and parks as a way to rest, relax, get away, be active, or get your mind off as a way to reenergize.
- C. Improves Quality of Life
 - Using recreation programs is a way to change self-image and gain personal satisfaction and enable positive self-esteem.

SOCIAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- A. Strengthens Communities
 - Recreation and parks bring neighbors together, encourages safer and cleaner neighborhoods, and creates a livelier community atmosphere
- B. Reduces Crime
 - Giving youth a safe, active, healthy place to go after school as well as the presence of park users in and around facilities helps deter crime.
- C. Encourages Volunteerism
 - The dedication and pride that people have for parks and recreation areas lead to increased interest and involvement in other aspects of the community.
- D. Promotes Stewardship
 - Open space and parks are ideal for encouraging and developing stronger relationships with the land and community as a whole.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PARKS²

- People are willing to pay a more for property located close to a park
- Parks can revive demand for neighboring commercial space
- Parks enable economic revitalization and aid in attracting and retaining business and residents
- Parks can be used as a prime marketing tool to attract tourists, conventions, and businesses.
- Organized events within public parks such as festivals or athletic events bring substantial positive economic impacts helping to fill hotel rooms and restaurants and other customers to the city

California State Parks 2005

² The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space, 2006, Trust of Public Lands