

Parks Legacy Plan

WHY IS THE LEGACY IMPORTANT?

Many things go into making a city a great place to live, work and raise a family. But one factor that stands out is its parks and other natural features. Few places can match the beauty of the Puget Sound region and few cities have a greater legacy of parks and natural spaces than Seattle does. Born with the donation of the first city park by the Denny family in 1884 and solidified by the vision of John Charles Olmsted more than 100 years ago, the importance we put on parks is a cornerstone of our quality of life here. Few cities can boast the diversity and abundance of parks, playgrounds and other natural spaces that Seattle can. We are where we are today because more than 100 years ago our city's leaders chose a future for the city that would emphasize parks.

Seattle's parks provide numerous benefits to the people of Seattle. Recent studies have quantified the physical, mental, and economic benefits of Seattle's parks. The Parks Legacy Plan collects and reports on some of these studies.

These outcomes are important to Seattle's health and vibrancy. For Seattle to remain a world class city that is attractive to businesses that provide jobs and people who want to work in those jobs, it needs to maintain a great park system with healthy open spaces and recreational opportunities.



Mission

Seattle Parks and Recreation provides welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community, and promotes responsible stewardship of the land.

PROPOSED NEW MISSION STATEMENT BY THE PARK BOARD



Outcomes

Healthy People
Healthy Environment
Financial Sustainability
Strong Communities



Values

Access
Opportunity
Sustainability

Parks Legacy Plan Strategic Process

The Draft Parks Legacy Plan is a big deal. We're launching the public input phase and we need to hear from you. If you care about our parks and their future—let your voice be heard! This is the time when the public can have the greatest impact in shaping the future of our parks.

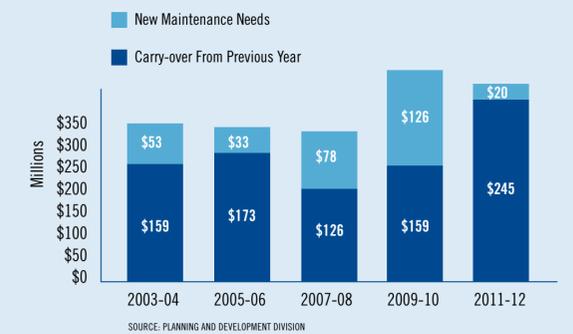


Why is This Planning Effort Important?

Recent levies have funded construction of new facilities and upgrades to existing ones. This both increases recreation opportunities and adds maintenance requirements. Due both to the recession and to the ongoing challenges facing the City budget, funding to maintain and operate facilities has not kept pace with needs. Due to the real estate market's variable nature and the pressures created by major maintenance funding priorities across the City, not just for Parks, major maintenance funding fluctuates. The list of needed but unfunded maintenance projects increases annually—resulting in a backlog of necessary repairs that goes unmet. The cost of the backlog of major maintenance projects has reached \$267 million, and increases each year as funding cannot keep pace with needed repairs.

In addition to the decline in maintenance abilities, fiscal constraints have forced Parks to limit use of public facilities through closures and/or reduced hours of operation.

FIGURE 1: THE COST OF ASSET MANAGEMENT



Parks Legacy Plan Timeline

We are making a huge drive to hear from the diverse communities that use parks for everything from sports, recreation, environmental exploration, urban peace and solitude, to programs offered through our 26 community centers. The public feedback phase ends May 24th. Please help us get the word out far and wide to draw a large, diverse turnout at the public meetings. And for those who can't attend encourage them to email or phone in comments.

GET THE PLAN
The Parks Legacy Plan itself and key dates and resources are available at www.seattle.gov/parks/legacy

EMAIL
Contact us directly at parkslegacy@seattle.gov

FACEBOOK
Like SeattleParks on Facebook to get updates on the Parks Legacy Plan and other Parks services

TWITTER
Follow @SeattleParks on Twitter and answer our "Tweek a Week"

APRIL 8, 2013
Draft Parks Legacy Plan released for public comment and posted on Parks website

APRIL 8 – MAY 24
Public comment taken via e-mail, snail mail, at public meetings, and through Facebook posts

JUNE
Draft 2 Parks Legacy Plan released with proposed recommendations

JUNE – NOVEMBER
Final Parks Legacy Plan Prepared

DECEMBER
Presentations to City Council

Your thoughts and comments about the plan are welcome at: parkslegacy@seattle.gov
For more information, please visit <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/legacy/>
or call Susanne Rockwell at 206.733.9702.

LOVE YOUR PARKS?

DRAFT PLAN
COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REVIEW

WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU NOW!



Parks Legacy Plan
Access, Opportunity, and Sustainability

Benefits of a Healthy Park System

HEALTHY PEOPLE
Physical activity reduces obesity and produces important physiological benefits, relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhancing psychological well-being.
Park-like settings are associated with feelings of peacefulness, tranquility and relaxation; and with enhanced mental attention and performance.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
The Trust for Public Land estimated Seattle's annual stormwater retention savings due to parks is over \$2.3 million.
About 48% of the city's parkland is tree-covered, removing about seven tons of carbon dioxide, 17 tons of nitrogen dioxide, 38 tons of ozone, 36 tons of particulate matter, and 17 tons of sulfur dioxide in 2010.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Over a five year period, from 2005 through 2010, the Trust for Public Land found residences located within 500 feet of a park had 4.8 percent higher property values, translating into an additional \$14.77 million in property tax collections during the five years.
The Trust for Public Land estimated that parks and events in parks generated \$4.3 million in tax revenue to the City in 2009.

STRONG COMMUNITIES
Parks' teen programs have strong public safety benefits.
Studies have shown that greener environments reduce aggressive behavior.
Community centers are neighborhood living rooms, providing places to gather, learn and have fun.
Volunteer opportunities bring people together around a common goal: tax revenue to the City in 2009.

As a reminder of the importance and value of our parks -we have 465 parks in Seattle that 80% of us visit at least twice a month. The natural beauty of our parks plays a central role in our quality of life including mental and physical health. How do we maximize access and enjoyment of our parks with available resources?

Budget Trends and Impacts

Implementing operational efficiencies has reduced the impact of budget reductions but has not solved the problem entirely. To improve efficiencies Parks has:

- Reduced energy costs by installing energy efficient lighting, replacing old boilers with new ones that conserve energy and installing low-water toilets
- Stopped the watering of grass in some parks allowing it to go brown in the summer
- Reorganized how we staff community centers and offer programs within geographic areas
- Restructured operations to reduce management expenses
- Worked with partners to expand our recreation programming.

The Parks Legacy Plan will identify what we need to do to preserve the system long into the future. It will identify specific actions that need to be taken now to preserve the Parks Legacy.

Partnerships

We are fortunate in Seattle to have many dynamic partnerships with nonprofits, community groups and individuals. These partnerships efficiently and effectively provide recreational programming and some park maintenance work. Others have provided critical capital funding and public involvement with park planning.

Existing partnerships bring hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer support to Parks each year, providing millions of dollars in improvements to existing parks and facilities, purchasing new park land and managing facilities to provide public benefits while saving taxpayer dollars.



FACILITY OR PROGRAM	AT A GLANCE . . .	BASIC SERVICE ASSESSMENT*	SURVEY RESULTS	PARTICIPATION/TRENDS	PARTNERS VOLUNTEER HOURS	TO PRESERVE THE LEGACY . . .
COMMUNITY CENTERS	26 centers offer senior and lifelong learning programs, before and after-school programs for youth and teens, food, fitness and health programs, arts and music, community basketball, intergenerational programs, late night recreation programs for teens and other drop-in activities.		-33% of all survey takers, and 50% of people with children under 18 visit community centers at least once a month. -The average respondent ranked community centers' importance as a 7.3 out of 10—9th on the list of 14 programs.	Enrollment in local community center programs increased 3% from 2010 to 2012, despite reduced hours of operation. Statewide, community centers remain an important recreation option for youth, seniors, and low-income individuals. Community centers have recently become more efficient in their use of funds through use of new multi-tiered center classification system, which reduces hours open to the public at peripheral centers but increased hours at "tier-one" centers.	The Associated Recreation Council (ARC) and the community center advisory councils allows each facility to offer a variety of programs and opportunities. ARC community center advisory councils—each tied to a specific community center—collected over \$7.5 million in revenue in 2011 to be distributed for community center programming.	Should community center programs seek to bring in more revenue? Is it more important to you for community centers to offer programs or just be open for people to gather and use as they choose?
LIFELONG RECREATION	Lifelong Recreation serves people over 50 by offering classes, trips, and activities that focus on physical activity, social engagement, education, arts and creativity, and healthy lifestyles. The program operates at multiple Seattle Parks and Recreation locations.		-46% of respondents said recreation programs for those older than 50 were important. -The average respondent ranked such activities' importance as 6.8 out of 10—11th on the list of 14 programs.	King County's senior population is smaller than the national average. However, seniors' share of King County's population, as projected by the Washington State Office of Financial Management, will grow to almost 20% by 2040.	Partners including Group Health, the Alzheimer's Association, University of Washington, Parkinson's Association and "Outdoors for All".	Should Parks implement a needs-based fee for Lifelong recreation with the goal of making it more financially self-sustaining? Does Lifelong recreation offer programs and services you can not find anywhere else? As the population of 50 plus grows should we expand Lifelong recreation programs?
SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS	Specialized Programs provides affordable, accessible, and adaptive recreation programs for youth and adults with disabilities.		-55% of respondents said recreation programs for people with special needs were important. -The average respondent ranked Specialized Programs' importance as 7.4 out of 10—8th on the list of 14 programs.	Seattle Parks is an approved DSHS DDD respite provider and receives reimbursement for services from Washington State, making it the only publicly subsidized program in Seattle that offers such a range of recreation programs. While specialized programs are viewed as a core service, providing a benefit to youth and adults with disabilities, fees are non-existent or low, resulting in a low cost-recovery.	Partners include Special Olympics—Washington and Seattle Adaptive Sports, both of which provide recreation opportunities to physically and developmentally disabled individuals.	Given the lack of other low-cost providers, should Parks continue to provide specialized programs? Should needs-based fees be charged for participation in specialized programs to make it more financially self-sufficient?
TEEN PROGRAMS	Teen programs include Youth Employment Service Learning, Late Night Recreation, and Youth Violence Prevention Power of Place. Youth Employment and Service Learning coordinates after school and summer job readiness and leadership programs for middle and high school youth. The Late Night program provides a safe, supervised environment for teens age 13-19, and serves over 40,000 youth annually. The Power of Place Program provides a safe space for teens at-risk for violence, by providing pro-social, pre-employment pathways and civic engagement opportunities through various recreation programs and services throughout Seattle.		-57% of respondents said recreation programs for teens were important. -The average respondent ranked teen recreation programs' importance as 7.5 out of 10—6th on the list of 14 programs.	A grant from Innovations in Civic Participation, a non-profit, allowed YES! to serve 70% more youth in 2012 than in 2011. Even with the significant funding increase in 2012, however, the program still had an 142-person waiting list. Late Night Recreation operates at 10 sites, and places emphasis on gender and culturally-specific programming, including a female-only volleyball program, and futsal, a South American soccer game. Power of Place's annual goal is to serve 400 Youth Violence Prevention Initiative-enrolled youth. Current efforts focus on increasing program participation, maintaining program participation throughout the year, and involving youth in academic, literacy, and enrichment programs.	In 2011, YES! program participants contributed over 19,000 volunteer hours. Partners include United Way of King County and numerous schools and neighborhood organizations.	What do you think is important to provide through teen programs? 1. Free programming? 2. Places for teens to just hang out with friends? 3. Youth employment, leadership development, and life skills development?
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS	Funded through the Families and Education Levy, community learning centers—each located at one of five Seattle public schools—provide academic, recreational, and family engagement opportunities when kids are out of school.			Over 4,500 individual students are served each year. 91% of students self-reported the program helped them succeed in school.	Seattle Public Schools.	Should Parks expand after school programs and should they be free to all regardless of ability to pay—even if similar programs are being offered by other organizations like YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs?
ATHLETICS	Citywide Athletics schedules 204 fields, four athletic complexes, 144 tennis courts, and two multi-use courts. Parks offers activities for both youth and adults, including basketball, flag football and volleyball.	Adult Athletics Youth Athletics	-39% use athletic fields monthly or more, with highest frequency use from ages 34-54. -Athletic fields received a score of 7.4 out of 10 in a rating of importance (with 10 being important), 7th on the list of 14 programs.	Field use demand continues to increase even as athletic preferences shift. Parks estimated that over 1.8 million players and spectators used Parks' athletic fields in 2011.	Partners include Seattle Public Schools, and Arena Sports. Volunteer field stewards line athletic fields before games.	Are there Parks athletic programs that duplicate offerings from other service providers? Should Parks stop offering those programs? Given that the demand for athletic field, and new and emerging activities continues to grow, what are creative ways to meet these needs? Synthetic turf fields require replacement every 10-12 years, at a cost of approximately \$1 million each. Are there creative ways to fund field replacement?
SWIMMING POOLS, SUMMER BEACHES, WADING POOLS, AND SPRAY PARKS	Eight year-round indoor pools offer swim lessons, fitness classes, open lap swims and public swims. Two summer-only outdoor pools provide general swimming availability, and realized sufficient revenues both in 2011 and 2012 to essentially cover operating costs. Operating for over 45 years, the Summer Beach program provides beach attendants at nine beaches over the course of the summer. Parks offers 16 wading pools and seven spray parks—used by families as a place to cool off and play during warm summer days.	Pools Summer Beaches	-Outdoor pools and spray parks ranked 6.9 out of 10 in a rating of importance (with 10 being important), 12th on the list of 14 programs. -9% use a community indoor pool at least weekly, and 15% use one at least monthly. 42% of individuals with children use them at least monthly.	Swimming is one of the most popular fitness sports. 50% of King County residents reported swimming in 2012. 40% swam in a pool, while 29% swam in natural waters.	Blocks of time are set aside at each of the eight indoor pools for school programs under an agreement to share public facilities with Seattle Public Schools.	What are ideas for investments that would make our existing pools more attractive? Should parks discontinue providing wading pools or continue converting the remaining wading pools to spray parks?
SMALL CRAFT CENTERS	Parks operates two boating centers—Green Lake Small Craft Center and Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center—in partnership with the Associated Recreation Council. Together, both centers host the largest after school youth rowing program in the region. Along with major regattas, each center hosts popular all-day summer camps.			Nationally, participation in recreational kayaking and canoeing have increased over the past five years, while participation in sailing has remained about the same. 11.5% of King County residents reported participating in any boating activity—canoeing, kayaking, rowing, manual craft—in the past year.	Key recommendations from a recently completed review were to continue City funding support while increasing partnership opportunities. In 2011, Associated Recreation Council (ARC) member councils supplemented the City's small craft funding with over \$1 million in programming at the two boating centers.	Are there creative ideas on how these programs may be developed further?
GOLF	Golfers play more than 200,000 rounds each year at Parks' four public courses, three driving ranges, and par-3 pitch-and-putt course. Revenue from greens fees, driving range fees, restaurants, and merchandise sales covers the courses' operating costs and provides for ongoing major maintenance work and major golf improvements.	Adult Golf Youth Golf	-10% play monthly or more; 18% play at least yearly.	National trends show a slight decrease in golf participation, but 18.6% of King County residents play at least yearly. King County Golfers spend an average of 12.2 days per year golfing.	Partners include The First Tee, a non-profit providing programs that promote healthy, active lifestyles to over 1,100 youth annually, and Bogey Bear Jr., which teaches golf—for free—to thousands of inner-city youth each year.	Seattle City Council recently approved the Golf Master Plan currently being implemented. Parks expects to continue the Golf Master Plan's implementation.
TENNIS AND AMY YEE TENNIS CENTER	Parks offers 144 outdoor tennis courts (71 lit) throughout the city. Amy Yee Tennis Center has ten indoor courts and six outdoor courts, and annually offers thirty-six total weeks of programming to 100,000 users.		-11% use outdoor courts monthly or more; 22% play at least yearly.	Increased participation nationally; 16% of King County residents play at least yearly. On average tennis players reported playing 23.1 days per year, more frequently than players of both basketball and golf. Amy Yee Tennis Center works with 100,000 users annually.	Construction is underway on 10 courts at the Sand Point Tennis Center, in partnership with Seattle Court Sport.	Changing the use of underutilized outdoor tennis courts to emerging activities has been a topic with some controversy over the past several years. Recognizing the growing demand of other activities and the perception of underutilized tennis courts what is the appropriate way to approach this issue?
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION	Parks staff, volunteers, and Audubon Society members educate the public about natural systems through interpretive programming at Parks' four Environmental Education Centers.		-50% of survey respondents felt that environmental education was important, with a score of 7.2 out of 10.		Volunteers contributed over 9,000 hours of support for environmental education in 2012. Participants in the Seattle Volunteer Naturalists program undergo 10 weeks of training and commit to at least one year of volunteering at Environmental Education Centers or parks near schools in Seattle.	What role should expanded partnerships play in providing environmental education programs?
PARKS RESOURCES (DAILY CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE)	The Parks Resources Unit is responsible for the upkeep and preservation of outdoor parks and other recreational areas to ensure they are clean and safe for public use. Eight geographically-based park district crews within the Parks Division handle day-to-day cleaning and landscape care. These crews—among other things—pick up litter, maintain grass and turf, landscape, clean picnic areas and comfort stations, sanitize hard surfaces, and also maintain trails and pathways.		-Respondents ranked routine daily maintenance their number-one funding priority. Routine daily maintenance received \$35.40 of \$100 dollars, the most allocated to any of the four funding priorities listed. -Respondents ranked comfort station cleaning and litter pickup as the two most important maintenance tasks.	Parks Resources' level of service, the percent of ideal, "gold-" level maintenance actually completed in a given year, stood below 60% across all parks in 2011. Recent budget pressures reduced the frequency of trash removal, mowing, weeding, and winter crew work. In addition, 42 positions were eliminated and 70 full-time positions reduced to less-than-full-time in 2011.	Volunteers contributed over 175,000 hours of support in 2011.	If you had \$1,000 to spend maintaining our developed parks, how would you allocate it? What led you to that allocation? 1. Cleaning comfort stations 2. Picking up litter 3. Cleaning hard services, picnic tables and benches 4. Grass and lawn maintenance 5. Maintaining sportsfields
FACILITY MAINTENANCE	The Facility Maintenance Unit—comprising carpentry, concrete, electrical, HVAC, machine, metalwork, plumbing, and paint shops—supports all other divisions and programs by performing maintenance activities across 570 buildings and all 6,200 acres of land.			In 2011, decreased facility maintenance for painting, metal fabrication, and fence repair (8 positions eliminated) saved \$520,000.		
MAJOR MAINTENANCE	Major maintenance projects are large-scale repairs and upgrades to park and facility infrastructure, and include roof replacements, plumbing overhauls, and electrical upgrades. Parks has identified 300 necessary major maintenance projects, with a total cost of about \$267 million.		-Respondents ranked major maintenance as their second-highest funding priority. Major maintenance received \$28.80 of \$100 dollars, the second most allocated to any of the four funding priorities listed.	Although major maintenance projects are completed each year, lack of funding has pushed the current backlog to \$267 million. \$9.8 million from the Parks and Green Spaces Levy was reapportioned in 2012 to major maintenance projects.	Volunteers do not have the training or expertise to safely perform these maintenance tasks.	What other factors ought to be considered when prioritizing major maintenance projects and what weight should be given to each factor? 1. Environmental impact 2. Opportunity for developing green infrastructure 3. Opportunity for external funding 4. Reduction of maintenance 5. Reduction of utility costs
NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT	The Natural Resources Unit, which includes Landscape Renovation, Specialty Gardens, Youth Green Corps, Urban Forestry, the Green Seattle Partnership, Natural Area Crews, and Heavy Equipment and Turf Crews, care for more specialized areas. They perform work in all park types.			Recent efficiencies included reducing six specialty garden positions from full-time to part-time, saving \$150,000; eliminating all four positions in the third tree trimming crew, saving \$150,000; and reducing two positions in the natural area crew, saving \$122,000.		If you had \$1,000 to spend on maintaining our natural areas how would you allocate it? What led you to that allocation? 1. Plant and maintain flower or shrub beds 2. Maintain or expand trails 3. Trim and maintain trees 4. Expand decent or adopt-a-park program 5. Forest restoration
SPECIALTY GARDENS	Parks' specialty gardens and the Arboretum display diverse and unique collections of plants, landscape features, and culturally significant objects. Parks' crews, horticulturalists, and other specialized workers maintain all these destination gardens except the Arboretum's tree collection.		-Respondents rated specialty gardens as a 6.9 out of 10 on a scale of importance, and 44% rated them as an 8, 9, or 10—12th most important of 14 services listed.	Each year, the Japanese Garden hosts about 40,000 visitors, while the Kubota Garden receives about 50,000.		Consider each of the following facilities and the consequences of a fee (consider an increased fee if a fee already exists), increasing events, marketing, education, capital campaigns, etc. 1. Japanese Garden 2. Kubota Garden 3. Conservatory 4. Arboretum
TRAILS PROGRAM	Trails Program staff work with over 20 organizations and hundreds of individual volunteers throughout the city to inventory Parks' 120 miles of trails system, and provide feedback for trail projects and planning across the city.		-Respondents rated "maintain trails" as a 8.2 out of 10 on a scale of importance, and 72% rated it as an 8, 9, or 10—4th most important of 9 services listed. -79% of respondents walked in or along a park monthly or more.	Major repairs occur on a 20-year cycle.		What would be the long-term impacts of regularly maintaining and marketing these trails networks? How do we connect at-risk youth to nature who may not otherwise have the opportunity? What is the value of getting kids familiar with the outdoors for their physical and mental well-being?
URBAN FORESTRY AND GREEN SEATTLE PARTNERSHIP	The Urban Forestry program works to manage tree health, meet canopy goals, and restore our forests. The Green Seattle Partnership is a unique public-private partnership between Parks, concerned citizens, and non-profit groups dedicated to re-establishing—and developing the capacity to maintain—2,500 acres of healthy forested parkland by 2025.		-Respondents rated "maintaining the health of the urban forest" as an 8.5 out of 10 on a scale of importance, 3rd on the list of 9 maintenance services.	Seattle Parks contain over 600,000 trees on developed park property, along miles of boulevards and in our 2,500 acres of forested lands. Parks manages over 20% of the total tree canopy of Seattle. With this amount of canopy, Parks' tree crews maintain 2,000 trees per year, on average. Over the past seven years, Parks planted and established 5,000 trees in developed parks.	Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment, Seattle Public Utilities, and Forterra (formerly Cascade Land Conservancy).	What value is the urban forest environmentally, socially and culturally to Seattle? Habitat protection is an important component of wildlife protection, what is the value of protecting biodiversity in our urban forests?
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY	The Environmental Stewardship program focuses on three areas that improve stewardship of our land and resources: utility conservation, irrigation, and urban food systems.			The program has installed high-efficiency lighting and controls, centrally controlled weather-based automatic controls, and low-water-use plumbing systems; replaced old boilers with high efficiency ones; and reduced vehicle fleet fuel use.	Seattle Tilth, City Fruit, among others.	Good environmental practices like limited watering of lawns can impact how parks look. Should being "green" take precedence over park appearance?
CENTER CITY PARKS	Center City Parks currently focuses on activating (holding events, hiring buskers and park concierges, and installing temporary works of art) Westlake, Victor Steinbrueck, Occidental, Freeway, and Hing Hay parks.			The Center City Parks activation program held over 160 events in 20 parks during 2011 and 2012.	Downtown Seattle Association, Metropolitan Improvement District, Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, The Alliance for Pioneer Square, the Chinatown International District Business Improvement Area, among others.	Should Parks continue to subsidize downtown park activation? Should corporate sponsorships be sought?

*To identify Seattle Parks and Recreation's basic services, staff sorted programs based on the amount of community versus individual benefit each provides. The bottom of the pyramid represents mostly community benefit, while the top of the pyramid represents mostly individual benefit. This continuum does not define the overall value of the program.