

Chapter 11

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (Park Plan) for Gig Harbor represents the City’s vision and provides goals and objectives for the development of parks, recreation and open spaces in Gig Harbor for the next six years and beyond. Only key elements of the Park Plan are incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter includes the goals and policies adopted in the Park Plan, while the inventory, levels of service and 6-year capital facilities projects are included in Chapter 12, Capital Facilities.

The planning area for this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan includes the City’s existing incorporated area and the City’s Urban Growth Area as defined in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan will focus on the City’s incorporated area, where the City has jurisdiction, with an eye toward serving the residents of the Urban Growth Area as annexations occur over the next 15 years.

Much has happened in Gig Harbor since the City’s prior Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan was adopted in 2010. The dramatic growth in the Gig Harbor peninsula’s population has resulted in an increased use of the City’s community parks and recreational facilities, which will likely continue over the foreseeable future. The demographics of Gig Harbor are also changing as a younger demographic is moving into the area. The increase in demand coupled with a changing demographic mean new challenges and opportunities for the City.

In an effort to provide quality parks and recreational opportunities for today’s residents as well as for future generations, the City initiated a planning process in conjunction with the overall update of the City’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan. This Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan is a stand-alone document which meets the requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office guidelines. It is also compliant with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). Parts of the PROS Plan may be incorporated into future updates of the Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan. The planning horizon for both plans is 2030, consistent with buildable lands projections for Pierce County and under the GMA requirements for long range planning.

The GMA requires a park and recreation element within the Comprehensive Plan that implements, and is consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. This element includes estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a fifteen-year period; an evaluation of facilities and service needs; and an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand.¹

¹RCW 36.70A.070(8) GMA

During the PROS Plan public outreach effort, the community expressed many ideas for improving parks and recreational opportunities in Gig Harbor including:

- Providing a balance of active and passive activities within the city’s parks;
- Seeking dedicated funding to support park management and maintenance responsibilities and costs;
- Providing trail connectivity between parks and connecting residential and commercial neighborhoods to the city’s park system; and
- Providing a park system that offers something for all ages and types of users.

This Plan considers today’s and tomorrow’s needs and is a community-driven plan that has broad-based support and is implementable over the 15-year plan horizon. This update:

- Identifies the anticipated types of activities and the population that the City’s parks and recreation facilities will serve,
- Defines the City’s vision of the future of the City’s park and recreational facilities,
- Identifies the estimated cost to achieve the community’s vision, and
- Provides goals and policies to act as a guide for getting there.

The 2016 Gig Harbor Park Recreation and Open Space Plan will help guide the city staff, park commission and city council in meeting identified gaps in services and park development in order to meet the need and support the quality of life for our citizens in the coming years.

VISION

Gig Harbor’s Vision: To develop a quintessential system of parks, trails and open spaces that enhance the City’s history, environmental features, and sense of place to encourage both active and passive forms of recreation popular on the peninsula.

GOALS AND POLICIES

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

GOAL 11.1: DEVELOP A HIGH QUALITY, DIVERSIFIED PARK SYSTEM THAT PRESERVES AND ENHANCES SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND FEATURES. INCORPORATE UNIQUE ECOLOGICAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES TO PROTECT THREATENED SPECIES, PRESERVE HABITAT, AND RETAIN MIGRATION CORRIDORS THAT ARE UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT TO LOCAL WILDLIFE.

11.1.1. Acquire and preserve especially sensitive or unique habitat sites that support threatened or endangered species and urban wildlife habitat.

11.1.2. Identify and conserve critical wildlife habitat including nesting sites, foraging areas, and migration corridors within or adjacent to natural areas, open spaces, and the developed urban areas.

11.1.3 Develop a system of open space corridors along natural stream and wetlands corridors that establish forest canopy that link to each other and from the uplands to the shore.

IDENTIFY URBAN GROWTH PRESERVES

GOAL 11.2: COORDINATE WITH OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES, AND WITH PRIVATE LANDOWNERS TO PRESERVE LAND AND RESOURCES NECESSARY TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY, CONVENIENT PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES BEFORE THE MOST SUITABLE SITES ARE LOST TO DEVELOPMENT.

11.2.1. Continue coordination with PenMet Parks and other agencies on meeting park, recreation, and open space needs through the City and urban growth area to assure that needs are met, and services are not duplicated.

11.2.2. Identify lands needed to meet long-term demand for parks, recreation and open space in developing areas such as the wooded, undeveloped, and sensitive lands.

11.2.3. Prior to annexation of urban growth areas review park, recreation, and open space needs to determine potential impacts to adopted levels of service. Such impacts shall be considered when determining the impacts of a potential annexation.

DEVELOPING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

GOAL 11.3: THROUGH THE CITY’S PERMIT PROCESS, REQUIRE, WHEN POSSIBLE, NEW DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND ACTIVE COMMERCIAL AREAS.

11.3.1. Require pedestrian friendly design features (including but not limited to placement of new buildings, on-site walkways, and pedestrian scale site features) on new developments to promote active healthy lifestyles within the community.

11.3.2. Require non-residential developments to provide common areas (such as town squares, plazas, or pocket parks) proportional to size of the development and the impact on existing park infrastructure to serve the recreational needs of employees and customers. Encourage these spaces to be used as the focus of commercial and civic buildings.

PARK DESIGN STANDARDS

GOAL 11.4: DESIGN AND DEVELOP FACILITIES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE, SAFE, AND EASY TO MAINTAIN WHILE PROVIDING A FULL RANGE OF FACILITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS BOTH INSIDE THE PRESENT CITY LIMITS AND IN THE UGA. PARKS FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT SHOULD HAVE LIFE CYCLE FEATURES THAT ACCOUNT FOR LONG-TERM COSTS AND BENEFITS.

General

11.4.1. Create park plans for the potential development and re-development of City park properties.

11.4.2. Incorporate features and amenities into parks that fit the local context; contribute to environmental sustainability; and are accessible, safe, and easy to maintain for the long term.

11.4.3. Provide maps at the City’s larger parks, documenting park and trail opportunities in the vicinity of the park.

11.4.4. Develop and maintain parks consistent with local, state and federal environmental regulations.

11.4.5 Provide facilities for all age groups and throughout the City and its UGA.

Accessibility

11.4.6. Design park and recreation facilities to be accessible in accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

Maintenance

11.4.7. Design and develop facilities that are of low maintenance and high capacity design to reduce overall facility maintenance and operation requirements and costs while providing for adequate facilities, amenities and attractive landscaping.

11.4.8. Where appropriate, use low maintenance materials, settings or other value engineering considerations that reduce care and security requirements, and retain natural conditions and experiences.

Security and Safety

11.4.9. Implement design and development standards that will improve park facility safety and implement security features for park users, department personnel, and the public-at-large.

11.4.10. Continue to develop and implement safety standards, procedures, and programs that will provide proper training and awareness for department personnel.

11.4.111. Define and enforce rules and regulations concerning park activities and operations that will protect user groups, department personnel, and the general public-at-large.

11.4.12. Where appropriate, use adopt-a-park programs, neighborhood park watches, park police patrols, and other innovative programs that will increase safety and security awareness and visibility.

Non-Motorized Access

11.4.13 Parks should be located such that the majority of the population can easily access them without driving a personal vehicle.

TRAIL AND CORRIDOR ACCESS SYSTEMS

GOAL 11.5: DEVELOP A HIGH QUALITY SYSTEM OF MULTIPURPOSE PARK TRAILS AND CORRIDORS THAT PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND LOW IMPACT RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES IN COORDINATION WITH THE CITY'S ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN.

Trail Systems

11.5.1. Create a comprehensive system of multipurpose off-road trails using the Cushman Trail as the backbone of the system. Trails should be developed to provide access to significant environmental features, public facilities, neighborhoods and businesses districts to promote physical activity and a health conscious community.

11.5.2. Leveraging the resources of WSDOT, private developers and other agencies, construct pedestrian facilities that cross SR-16 and other highways (ex: pedestrian overpass at BB16).

11.5.3. Trails should be connected to nearby sidewalk facilities wherever feasible to facilitate the use of the off-street trail systems for non-motorized transportation and recreation. Where sidewalks are an integrated component of a trail system, larger sidewalks may be needed.

11.5.4. Work with PenMet Parks, Pierce County, Tacoma, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and other appropriate jurisdictions to link and extend Gig Harbor trails to other regional trail facilities.

11.5.5. Extend trails through natural area corridors like the Crescent and Donkey (North) Creek corridors, and Wollochet Drive wetlands within the City that will provide a high quality, diverse sampling of area environmental resources, in balance with habitat protection.

Trail Development and Amenities

11.5.6. Develop trails consistent with the park development goals and policies where applicable.

11.5.7. Furnish trail systems with appropriate supporting trailhead improvements that may include interpretive and directory signage systems, rest stops, drinking fountains, restrooms, parking and loading areas, water and other services.

11.5.8. Where appropriate, locate trailheads at or in conjunction with park sites, schools, and other community facilities to increase local area access to the trail system and reduce duplication of supporting improvements.

11.5.9. Develop trail improvements of a design that is easy to maintain and access by maintenance, security, and other appropriate personnel, equipment, and vehicles.

11.5.10. Develop trail accessibility standards to provide for accessible trails where possible and support a diversity of non-motorized uses. Such standards should not prohibit construction of trails where grade or corridor width will not allow full accessibility or trail widths for all uses.

11.5.11. Develop and implement a system of signs to mark trails and non-motorized routes that coordinates with the City's streetscape and furniture standards. Such signage should be developed in accordance with the City's adopted way finding plan.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

GOAL 11.6: DEVELOP A QUALITY, DIVERSIFIED RECREATION SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES FOR ALL AGE AND INTEREST GROUPS.

Waterfront Access and Facilities

11.6.1. Cooperate with Pierce County, PenMet Parks, the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife, and other public and private agencies to acquire and preserve additional shoreline access for waterfront fishing, wading, swimming, viewing and other related recreational activities and pursuits, recognizing the rights of property owners in the vicinity of such sites.

11.6.2. Develop and/or encourage a mixture of watercraft access opportunities including canoe, kayak, sailboard, and other non-power boating activities, especially on Gig Harbor Bay and along the Puget Sound shoreline.

Athletic Facilities

11.6.3. Concentrate on field and court activities like soccer, football, baseball, basketball, tennis, pickleball and volleyball that provide for the largest number of participants.

11.6.4. Encourage, leverage the development, or develop, where appropriate, a select number of facilities that provide a quality playing environment, possibly in conjunction with PenMet Parks, Pierce County, Peninsula School District, and other public or private agencies. Such facilities should be developed to meet the requirements for all age groups, skill levels, and recreational interests where possible.

Indoor Facilities

11.6.5. Facilitate the continued development by the Peninsula School District and other organizations, of special meeting, assembly, eating, health, cultural, and other community facilities that provide general support to school age populations and the community-at-large at elementary, middle, and high schools within the City, urban growth area and the greater peninsula.

11.6.6. Look for opportunities to partner with PenMet and other organization to provide indoor recreational facilities for all ages (including play structures and both organized and individual sports facilities).

Play Structures

11.6.7. Provide play structures for tots (2-5) and school aged children (5-12) and a teen activity area within neighborhood parks.

SPECIAL PURPOSE FACILITIES

GOAL 11.7: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY FACILITIES THAT MEET THE INTERESTS OF ALL SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

11.7.1. Where appropriate and economically feasible (self-supporting), encourage other organizations to develop and operate specialized and special interest recreational or cultural facilities like theater, golf and water parks for these interests in the general population.

11.7.2. Where appropriate, facilitate and encourage joint planning and operating programs with other public and private agencies to determine need and provide for special activities like golf, performing arts, water parks, and camping on an area wide basis.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

GOAL 11.8: COORDINATE WITH AND ENCOURAGE THE EFFORTS OF OTHER AGENCIES AND NON-PROFIT RECREATIONAL PROVIDERS TO ASSURE THAT THE RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF THE GIG HARBOR RESIDENTS ARE MET.

11.8.1. Facilitate and encourage other organizations to provide arts and crafts, classroom instruction in music and dance, physical conditioning and health care, meeting facilities, daycare,

latch key, and other program activities for all cultural, age, physical and mental capability, and income groups in the community.

11.8.2. Endorse the efforts of local non-profit organizations to provide soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, pickleball, and other instruction and participatory programs for all age, skill level, and income groups in the community.

11.8.3. Assist historical and cultural societies to develop and display artifacts, reports, and exhibits; and conduct lectures, classes, and other programs that document and develop awareness of Gig Harbor's heritage.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

GOAL 11.9: DEVELOP A HIGH QUALITY, DIVERSIFIED PARK SYSTEM THAT PRESERVES SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS AND FEATURES.

11.9.1. Identify, preserve, and enhance Gig Harbor's multicultural heritage, human history of the City and its neighborhoods, traditions, and cultural features including historic sites, buildings, artworks, objects, views, and monuments.

11.9.2 Identify and incorporate significant historic and cultural lands, sites, artifacts, and facilities into the park system to preserve these interests and to provide a balanced social experience.

11.9.3 Register City owned parks, structures and open space properties that are eligible for the Gig Harbor Register of Historic Places and utilize the City's Certified Local Government (CLG) board to determine appropriate preservation methods and traditional uses.

11.9.4. Encourage the Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor BoatShop, Gig Harbor Fishermen's Civic Club and others to make cultural programs and activities more accessible to the public.

11.9.5. Encourage the owners of historic sites and structures to provide increased public access.

11.9.6. Consider adopting incentives for properties listed on the City's Historic Register to encourage maintenance and retention of structures as properties are re-developed, including adaptive re-use provisions.

CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

The purpose of this section is to delineate the importance of The Arts – visual art, music, theater, dance, poetry and prose, film and other creative endeavors – as they relate to the quality of life in Gig Harbor.

The Gig Harbor Arts Commission plays a vital role in our town’s culture by supporting and promoting the arts and arts organizations. The Commission oversees the acquisition and placement of public art, fosters arts and cultural programs for the enrichment of citizens and visitors, encourages an environment for the success of working artists and strengthens new and existing arts organizations. The Arts Commission supports the following statements:

- The arts provide tools for accomplishing larger community goals such as economic vitality, quality education and community planning and design.
- Arts and culture are essential to the continuing growth and development of our community’s economy, education and quality of life. Support of the arts is an investment in making our community a better place to live.
- The arts help strengthen our cultural fabric and enrich the lives and spirits of our citizens.
- Arts and cultural programs are a powerful economic development tool in their ability to enhance Gig Harbor’s image and thereby entice new businesses to locate here.
- The arts can be a source of civic pride and Gig Harbor is a place where citizens and visitors alike can be engaged and inspired.

GOAL 11.10: CELEBRATE THE CREATIVE SPIRIT OF OUR COMMUNITY AND ENCOURAGE FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS THAT REFLECT THE COMMUNITY'S VISION AND CULTURE.

11.10.1. Identify public visual, written and performing art opportunities that highlight the cultural and historical connections within our community through local history, environmental systems, cultural traditions, and visual symbols.

11.10.2. Enhance the reputation of Gig Harbor as a livable and creative community by encouraging artists of all types to display and perform their work and supporting opportunities for creative expression.

11.10.3. Use public art to create visible landmarks and artistic points of reference to reinforce Gig Harbor’s identity, unique culture and character.

11.10.4. Acquire works of art through a variety of methods including commissioned works, temporary works, direct purchases, and community projects.

11.10.5. In cooperation with area artists and cultural organizations, utilize the city’s website as a clearinghouse for arts information and resource sharing.

11.10.6. Encourage the development of spaces where visual and performing arts can be enjoyed by all. This includes visual and performing arts centers, street fairs, and market places that include performance and display spaces. (Resolution No. 861.)

11.10.7. Encourage and support work by local artists and support visual, written and performing arts programs and partnerships that reflect our community's vision and culture.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND COORDINATION

GOAL 11.11: CREATE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT METHODS OF ACQUIRING, DEVELOPING, OPERATING AND MAINTAINING FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT ACCURATELY DISTRIBUTE COSTS AND BENEFITS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT.

Finance

11.11.1. Investigate available methods for the financing of facility development, maintenance, and operation in order to reduce costs, retain financial flexibility, match user benefits and interests, and increase facility services.

11.11.2. Consider joint ventures with other public and private agencies such as PenMet Parks, Pierce County, Peninsula School District, regional, state, federal, and other public and private agencies including for-profit concessionaires, where feasible and desirable.

Public and Private Resource Coordination

11.11.3. Cooperate with PenMet Parks, Pierce County, Peninsula School District, and other public and private agencies to avoid duplication, improve facility quality and availability, reduce costs, and represent resident area interests through joint planning and development efforts.

Cost/Benefit Assessment

11.11.4. Define existing and proposed land and facility levels-of-service (ELOS/PLOS) that differentiate requirements due to: population growth impacts versus improved facility standards; neighborhood versus community nexus of benefit; city versus the combination of city, county, school, and other provider agency efforts; in order to effectively plan and program park and recreation needs within the existing city and urban growth area boundaries.

11.11.5. Create effective and efficient methods of acquiring, developing, operating, and maintaining park and recreational facilities in manners that accurately distribute costs and benefits to public and private user interests - including the application of growth impact fees where new developments impact existing level-of-service (ELOS) standards.

OPERATIONAL AND STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

GOAL 11.12: DEVELOP, TRAIN, AND SUPPORT A PROFESSIONAL PARKS STAFF THAT EFFECTIVELY SERVES THE COMMUNITY IN THE REALIZATION OF THE ABOVE LISTED GOALS AND POLICIES.

11.12.1. Continue to train a diverse, well-trained work force that is motivated to achieve department and citywide goals.

11.12.2. Encourage teamwork through communications, creativity, positive image, risk taking, sharing of resources, and cooperation toward common goals.

11.12.3. Where appropriate, provide staff with education, training, and modern equipment and supplies to increase personal productivity, efficiency, and pride.