

# Chapter 4. PARKS

## 4.1. Introduction

This Parks Element of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan provides direction and guidance, based on citizen input, to improve and maintain the City's existing parks and create new parks to meet the needs of a growing population. This element is supplemented by the 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan adopted by reference in Appendix B to the City's Comprehensive Plan. This element reflects the community's vision, goals and expectations regarding existing City park facilities and future parks. It has been developed as a collaborative effort with input from members of the public, elected and appointed officials, and Planning Department staff. The Element was updated to reflect current (2015) data, facilities, and population, with the planning horizon projected to 2036.

### *Parks Vision*

***Parks and green space are essential components in the fabric of a vibrant city. Our safe and well-maintained parks and recreation facilities knit the community together, stabilize and enhance residential neighborhoods and add vitality to the downtown while encouraging and supporting increased shoreline access and recreation.***

The Parks Element, in conjunction with the PROS Plan, is the guiding document that the City will use to achieve its goals of providing parks, open space, active recreation opportunities, and related services to meet the needs and expectations of

Port Orchard's citizens. The Parks Element serves as a guide for general improvements to the park system while the PROS Plan provides more detailed plans for a citywide park and trail

network and specific plans for individual parks. The City of Port Orchard regulatory and non-regulatory decisions and programs, as well as budget decisions related to parks, should be consistent with this Parks Element and with the PROS Plan. Used in this way, comprehensive parks planning minimizes conflict in decision-making and promotes coordination among programs and regulations to best serve the whole Port Orchard community.

Over the next 20 years, the City of Port Orchard plans to focus on



maintaining existing parks facilities while slowly expanding to meet future needs. To meet the needs of a growing community for parks, trails, recreation and open space, maintenance of existing facilities and creation of new facilities would be funded by annual budget expenditures, grants, impact fees and other financial means available to the City. The Port Orchard PROS Plan is the planning document that allows the City to budget its resources to meet the goals and objectives for municipal parks.

Although the emphasis is to maintain the existing park system, the number of parks and trails will need to increase to meet the demands of the new population. Based on the levels of service identified in the City's PROS Plan, over the next 20 years the City should acquire additional acres for new parks, recreation and open space opportunities consistent with the PROS Plan.

The City's goals within the 20-year planning horizon include non-motorized transportation options (trails and walking/bicycle paths) to connect the local centers established in the Land Use Element of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and to provide all of Port Orchard's residents opportunities to enjoy active recreation and open spaces. The City continues to work toward expanding the non-motorized path along Sinclair Inlet as part of the regional Mosquito Fleet Trail. The City also plans, as funds become available, to update and expand the existing parks facilities to provide each local center with access to parks and recreation opportunities. Existing and future parks and trails are depicted on Map 1.

## 4.2. Public Involvement and History of Parks Planning

To ensure that the plan meets public needs, it is based on public input. Public opinion has been sought during Comprehensive Plan Updates and Parks Plan Updates for decades. City staff, appointed and elected officials have been gauging community opinions through surveys



and public hearings since 1975. The entire community is invited to comment, which helps to introduce different perspectives into the policy and goal setting process.

### 2015 Parks Survey

In 2015, as a part of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update process, staff sent an online survey, created using Google forms, to City organizations, citizens

who have asked to be notified about Comprehensive Plan Updates, and elected and

appointed officials. The 2015 Parks Survey was conducted to help update the Parks Element of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan (Vision Port Orchard) and the City's Parks Plan. It was structured similarly to past parks surveys, but was only distributed in an online electronic format and included a variety of updated and new questions related to recent developments in parks planning. The goal of the survey was to provide guidance on how to plan, operate, maintain, and fund Port Orchard's parks over the next 20 years.

The survey was first announced via e-mail and the City's official Facebook page on July 20, 2015 and was closed August 23, 2015. A total of 184 respondents were recorded. The Vision Port Orchard e-mail list gained 73 new subscribers for an updated total of 263 subscribers. Survey respondents expressed a consistent desire for a



few key park features: walking/jogging/running paths, restrooms, picnic areas, and playgrounds. Other types of features, such as meeting areas and athletic facilities, received support as well but were discussed less in written comments. The results of the 2015 electronic surveys are included in Appendix G of the City's Comprehensive Parks Plan.

#### YMCA Feasibility Study

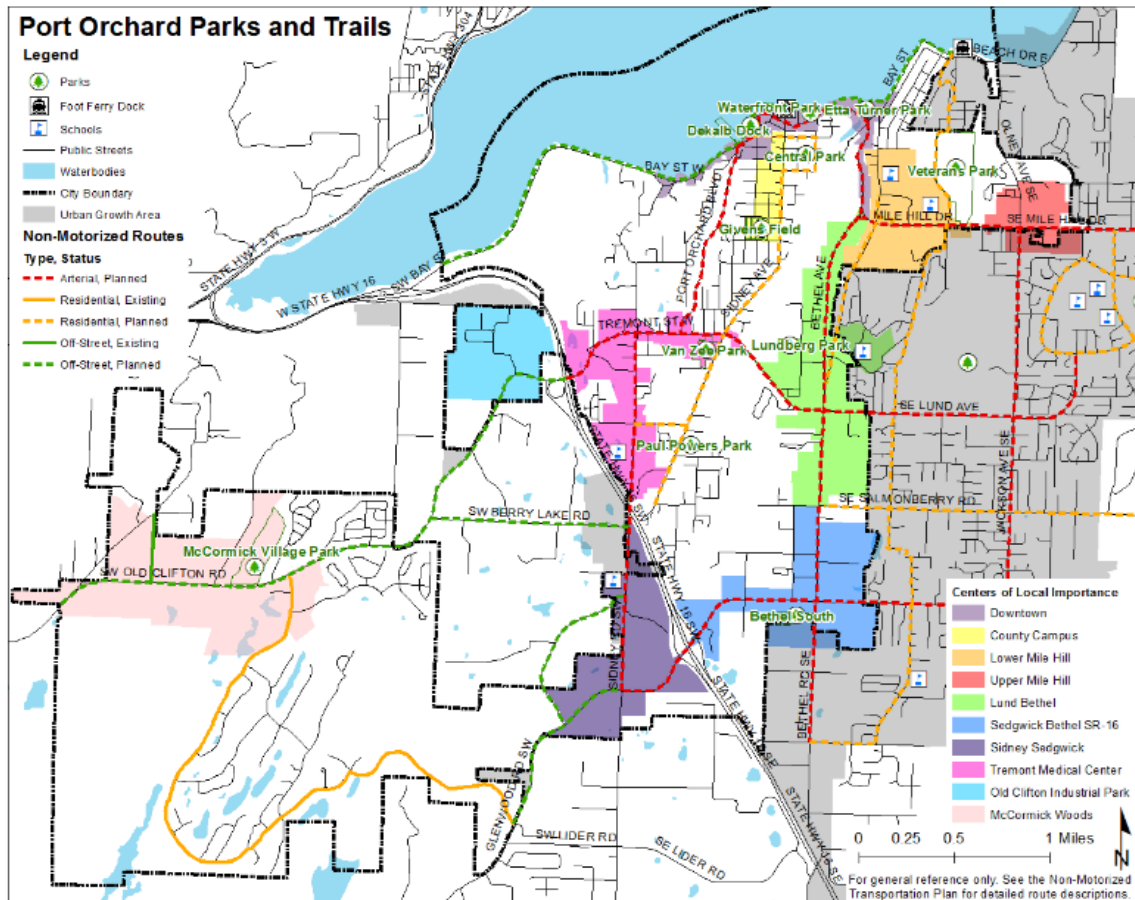
In 2016, the YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties and several local agencies, including the City of Port Orchard, hired a consultant to conduct a study on the feasibility of developing a YMCA community center to serve the South Kitsap/Port Orchard community. The study included a telephone survey of 402 random residents of the local area. The study indicated that for themselves, adult residents are most interested in a swimming pool, cardiovascular and strength training equipment, and for their children and teens they are most interested in having a swimming pool, youth sports and a safe "meeting place". South Kitsap Regional Park (outside of the city limits) was the identified preferred location for the facility. The study suggested a strong demand for a YMCA in the identified area. It is anticipated that the City

and other agencies will continue to explore this possibility in future planning and budgetary efforts.

### 4.3. Parks Vision – Connections

The City of Port Orchard 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update identifies eleven (11) designated Centers. The vision of the Parks Element and PROS Plan is to ensure that every center contains and/or is connected to a park by safe non-motorized routes.

Walking/jogging/running paths were a top priority identified in the 2015 Parks Survey. Connecting local centers and parks with safe non-motorized routes, including those in public right-of-way such as bike lanes and walking shoulders, will increase access to active transportation for all residents and benefit the entire community. The Non-Motorized section of the Transportation Element provides further detail on existing and future trails.



Map 1: Parks and Trails are shown in relation to the City’s Designated Centers.

## 4.4. Existing Conditions

Port Orchard is a community which provides a full range of parks, recreation, open space, and ecosystem services by protecting native wildlife habitat, restoring and preserving natural systems, enjoying majestic marine and mountain views, and ensuring new development enhances the natural environment. The existing City parks system is supplemented by the schools of the South Kitsap School District, and the Kitsap County Parks and Recreation Department. An inventory of current parks facilities and maps showing park facility locations is included in the PROS Plan.

## 4.5. Future Planned Parks Facilities

The PROS Plan provides a long-term vision and goals for the entire parks network, for non-motorized transportation linkages, and for specific City-owned properties as well as a capital improvement program for parks.

## 4.6. Challenges and Opportunities

### Challenges

The City of Port Orchard faces a rapidly growing population. To provide adequate parks, trails and recreational opportunities for the growing community, the City is working to expand the McCormick Village Park, purchase the Seattle Avenue property to serve as a small park and trail connection for the Bay Street Pedestrian Pathway, and lease a landscaped area near the Westbay Center where public art will be installed. As the City's population and parks facilities grow, limited City resources, including staff time are taxed. In the future, the City may wish to contemplate creating a Parks Department.

The relative lack of safe non-motorized transportation infrastructure (i.e. walking and bicycling paths) within the city is identified as a significant issue in the Non-Motorized section of the Transportation Element. It is also a challenge for parks and recreation planning, as one of the City's identified goals is to create non-motorized trail and path connections between local centers, parks, the waterfront, and other areas where people live and work within the community.

### Opportunities

The City of Port Orchard benefits from its proximity to centers for recreation, open space, and sports fields outside City Limits and/or held by other agencies or groups, such as the South Kitsap School District and Kitsap County. Creating and strengthening regional partnerships will enable Port Orchard and its partners to provide greater facilities and opportunities than would be possible alone.

The City of Port Orchard is already working with Kitsap County and other nearby jurisdictions to expand a regional water trail including shoreline access with launch points, rest areas, and parking facilities. As identified in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, additional improvements to the City's non-motorized transportation network should be a priority, and will expand and enhance the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy a safe, interconnected system of parks and trails.

## 4.7. Goals and Objectives

The City of Port Orchard has maintained a consistent set of goals and objectives in its endeavor to provide recreational opportunities to the community. The overall goal of the Parks element is as follows:

**To develop and maintain adequate and convenient Parks, Recreation, and Open Space areas and facilities for all age groups and to better serve both the existing and future population of Port Orchard and surrounding areas. This goal can be achieved by several objectives.**

**Objective 1: Increase public access to the marine shoreline.**

**Objective 2: Preserve active and scenic open space by:**

- a. enhancing and expanding park facilities
- b. discouraging obstructions of scenic views

**Objective 3: Increase the size and number of parks and open spaces by:**

- a. establishing partnerships with other agencies to jointly utilize public facilities
- b. promoting through public and private investments, the acquisition of open space facilities and assuring proper maintenance thereof
- c. using public input to develop plans for public parks
- d. providing for a mixture of active and passive open spaces within residential and commercial areas

As South Kitsap County and Port Orchard continue to grow, the importance of the limited recreational resources continues to increase. Greater population pressures demand well-defined goals and priorities. In order to achieve these comprehensive goals and objectives, concise and realistic goals must be specified:

**Goal I: Establish a coordinated and connected system of open space throughout the City that:**

- Preserves natural systems

- Protects wildlife habitat and corridors
- Provides land for both active and passive recreation
- Increases opportunities for physical activity
- Preserves natural landforms and scenic areas
- Is accessible by a safe non-motorized transportation system

Policy PK-1 Preserve and enhance the natural and aesthetic qualities of shoreline areas while allowing reasonable development to meet the needs of residents.

Policy PK-2 Promote visual and public access to shorelines where it is not in conflict with preserving environmentally sensitive areas or protecting significant wildlife habitat.

Policy PK-3 Distribute parks and open spaces throughout the City, but particularly focus new facilities in or near:

- Designated centers that do not currently contain parks or open spaces
- Residential neighborhoods facing the greatest population growth where populations are currently or are projected to be underserved by existing parks facilities
- Areas where existing facilities are deficient
- Areas where connections could be made

Policy PK-4 Work with nearby jurisdictions and state, federal, and tribal governments to identify and protect open space networks to be preserved within and around Port Orchard.

Policy PK-5 Preserve environmentally sensitive areas to delineate neighborhood boundaries and create open space corridors.

**Goal 2: Encourage the development and maintenance of open space and recreational facilities, where possible, in the established areas of the City.**

Policy PK-6 Obtain and preserve open space areas and recreational facilities to meet established recreational levels of service and to link open spaces within a connected network accessible to the existing and future population of the City.

Policy PK-7 Preserve the ecological functions of the Blackjack Creek watershed, the shoreline, and adjacent areas in balance with residential, commercial, and other uses.

Policy PK-8 Shape and seek the right balance for urban development through the use of open space, thereby strengthening the beauty, identity, and aesthetic qualities of the City and surrounding areas.

Policy PK-9 Maintain and/or expand shoreline parks, including walking and biking trails, which would link the downtown core to the shoreline. Proposed walking and biking trails should also be designed to serve residential areas.

Policy PK-10 Encourage safe parks and recreational equipment by maintaining existing facilities.

Policy PK-11 Develop covered play structures whenever feasible to encourage use of parks and facilities in inclement weather.

Policy PK-12 Work with the Port of Bremerton to identify areas within the existing Port-owned waterfront parking lots that are suitable for conversion to open space. Upon mutual agreement of the parking areas to be converted, develop a plan for the creation of waterfront open space in these areas, with a focus on connection to existing and planned shoreline access points and pedestrian pathways.

**Goal 3: To provide open space or natural landscaping throughout the City limits.**

Policy PK-13 Zoning ordinances shall identify and preserve open space areas.

Policy PK-14 Landscaping, such as trees and shrubbery, should be included in the commercial areas of the City.

Policy PK-15 Vacant municipal land not required for municipal services shall be maintained to provide a pleasing natural condition.

**Goal 4: Neighborhood parks and recreational facilities should be conveniently located throughout the City.**

Policy PK-16 The Active Club should continue to be maintained and improved.

Policy PK-17 A community recreation center should be encouraged.



Policy PK-18 To ensure that the City’s parks and recreational facilities are welcoming to all, new facilities shall be designed for accessibility to meet the requirements of the federal American Disabilities Act, and existing facilities should be retrofitted for increased accessibility where feasible and appropriate.

Policy PK-19 Maximize the use of State and Federal grants for future improvements whenever possible.

Policy PK-20 Coordinate with other governmental entities and civic organizations to provide new facilities to the public.

Policy PK-21 Encourage commercial enterprises to establish facilities which are harmonious with the community vision and goals.

**Goal 5: Athletic endeavors and organized sports should be encouraged throughout the community.**

Policy PK-22 Athletic fields should be supplemented with picnic and playground facilities to encourage family participation.

Policy PK-23 Any vacant public land large enough for an athletic field should be considered for this purpose, when feasible.

Policy PK-24 Private sports programs should be encouraged.

Policy PK-25 Coordinate with sports councils and committees when possible.

**Goal 6: The waterfront should be preserved and protected to enhance public use.**

Policy PK-26 Boat docks and marinas should be encouraged; however, these activities are not to be construed as the sole resource of the waterfront.

Policy PK-27 Public access to the water is required for new municipal development, unless such access is shown to be incompatible due to reasons of safety, security or impact to the shoreline environment, and it should be provided for new commercial development unless such improvements are demonstrated to be infeasible or present hazards to life and property.

Policy PK-28 Viewing decks and similar pedestrian-oriented structures are needed and should be constructed in the urban waterfront area.

Policy PK-29 The Bay Street Pedestrian Path system should be maintained and expanded.

Policy PK-30 Beach access should be identified and developed. This should be integrated with the Bay Street Pedestrian Path trail system and Kitsap Peninsula Water Trails system.

**Goal 7. Provide a variety of water and shoreline related recreational opportunities for the public.**

Policy PK-31 The City, in conjunction with other agencies and organizations, should work to maintain and enhance existing recreational opportunities for the public.

Policy PK-32 The City, in conjunction with other jurisdictions, should work to develop new and diverse water and shoreline related recreational opportunities for the public.

**Goal 8. Provide open space within residential and commercial developments and preserve critical areas within open space.**

Policy PK-33 Buffers and open space should be a required design element in new developments.

Policy PK-34 Steep slopes and sensitive areas within open space should be protected with critical area restrictions.

**Goal 9. Promote the acquisition and maintenance of open space through public and private investment.**

Policy PK-35 Countywide open space acquisition should be encouraged.

Policy PK-36 Maintenance of City-owned open space should take precedence over acquisition of new City parks, unless the proposed park serves an identified need in the City's Parks Plan.

**Goal 10. Enhance and expand existing park facilities.**

Policy PK-37 Improvements in parks should be done continually.

**Goal 11. Place and construct community entry monuments on arterial city entrances.**

Policy PK-38 Maintain and landscape existing Gateway areas.

Policy PK-39 Install wayfinding signage according to wayfinding system plan.

**Goal 12. Provide dedicated oversight and encourage citizen participation in planning for City parks and recreation facilities.**

Policy PK-40 The City should establish a parks commission or similar citizen board that would review major parks development plans, proposals to purchase or sell City parks property, and related matters, and provide recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Policy PK-41 The City should consider creating a Parks Department to operate and maintain City parks and recreation facilities, and to plan and budget for future acquisitions and improvements.